



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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ABOUT US

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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.

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Contents

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Bahrain..... | 1 |
| Egypt..... | 2 |
| Iraq..... | 3 |
| Iran..... | 4 |
| Israel..... | 6 |
| Jordan..... | 7 |
| Kuwait..... | 8 |
| Lebanon..... | 9 |
| Oman..... | 10 |
| Qatar..... | 11 |
| Saudi Arabia..... | 12 |
| Syria..... | 13 |
| Turkey..... | 14 |
| UAE..... | 15 |
| Yemen..... | 16 |

Abstract

Confrontation between Egypt and Turkey over Libya is escalating. Egypt has drawn red lines and President El-Sisi warned Turkey that the flow of Turkish-backed militias into Libya means an assault on the national security of Egypt, which could result in direct military intervention. In other major news, Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi will visit Washington next week for the second round of strategic talks between the two countries. The Iraqi government has also received parliamentary approval to borrow USD 5 billion from abroad to cope with the on-going COVID-19 crisis and fall in crude oil prices.

The COVID-19 pandemic and U.S. sanctions have ravaged Iran's economy. President Rouhani accepted this reality, while, Supreme Leader Khamenei warned that Iran's economy could worsen further if coronavirus continues to spread. In a major development of geopolitical significance, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced plans to establish a permanent military base in the Indian Ocean by March 2021. The U.S. on the other hand continues to push for re-imposition of the UN arms embargo on Iran. Secretary of State Pompeo said, "If the UN fails to extend an arms embargo on Iran, the U.S. will seek "snap back" multilateral sanctions."

India-Israel defence cooperation has strengthened significantly in the last few years. In the on-going standoff between India and China, Israeli Heron drones have been used for technical surveillance in Eastern Ladakh. Israel has also committed to provide air defence equipment to India.

The Vande Bharat Mission launched to repatriate stranded Indian's from abroad has entered fourth phase. In this phase 41 flights from Kuwait, 59 from UAE and 16 from Oman will be operated for repatriation. In other major news that will affect thousands of Indian Muslims, Saudi Arabia has barred international pilgrims from performing Haj in 2020.

On the economic front, a consortium of six global firms entered into a deal worth \$20 billion with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) on June 23, 2020. In another news of major geo-economic significance, Hezbollah Chief Hassan Nasrallah has said, "China is prepared to invest in key infrastructure projects in Lebanon should the crisis-hit country embrace the East."

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain's Economy is 'reviving' with Crucial Months Coming up, Says National Bank of Bahrain CEO](#)

June 28, 2020, Arabian Business

It may be too early to predict when Bahrain's economy will fully recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but its handling of the crisis has allowed it to weather the storm better as compared to many other countries, according to National Bank of Bahrain CEO Jean Christophe Durand.

Egypt

[Egypt's President El-Sisi Sends Sharp, Clear Message to Turkey on Libya](#)

June 26, 2020, Arab News

Cairo's message to Turkey is very clear: Any action that threatens Libya's security and stability is also a threat to Egypt. The flow of Turkish-backed militias and mercenaries into Libya does not mean anything but an assault against the national security of Egypt, which requires a direct military intervention.

[Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to Agree Nile Dam Deal 'in Two Weeks'](#)

June 27, 2020, Al Jazeera

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan will agree a deal to fill the giant Blue Nile dam in two to three weeks, following mediation by the African Union to broker a deal to end a decade-long dispute over water supplies.

Iraq

[Iraq to Hold Early Parliamentary Elections](#)

June 24, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The Iraqi government is currently preparing for “early legislative elections” to complete the country’s sustainable constitutional establishment, Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, announced.

[Iraqi Government Gets Parliament's Nod for Massive Borrowing](#)

June 25, 2020, The National

Iraq’s parliament authorised the new government to borrow up to \$5 billion from abroad after the fall in oil prices caused a financial crunch.

[Iraq’s Prime Minister to Visit Washington Next Month for Talks on US Troops Withdrawal](#)

June 24, 2020, Arab News

Al-Kadhimi’s visit to Washington will begin the second round of talks between the US and Iraq – which will be the first of their kind in more than a decade.

Iran

[Iran Experiencing Its Toughest Year Due to Sanctions, COVID-19: Rouhani](#)

June 28, 2020, The Hindu

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday (June 28) that his country is experiencing its toughest year because of U.S. sanctions coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Iran to Set Up New Naval Base in Indian Ocean](#)

June 23, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has announced it plans to establish a permanent military base in the Indian Ocean by March 2021.

[Warplanes Strike Iranian Base in Syria after Visit by IRGC Head](#)

June 28, 2020, Times of Israel

Unidentified aircraft bombed Iran-backed forces in Syria near an Iraqi border crossing known as a key weapons conduit, a war monitor said Saturday (June 27).

[India's UCO Bank Eyes Non-Oil Import from Iran to Sustain Rupee-Rial Trade](#)

June 27, 2020, Financial Tribune

With India no longer importing oil from Iran, UCO Bank is looking at other avenues to keep the rupee payment mechanism with Iran alive. According to A K Goel, CEO of UCO Bank, is in talks with importers to use the mechanism for other imports.

[US Blacklists Companies in Iran's Metals Sector as part of Sanctions](#)

June 25, 2020, Al Jazeera

The United States on Thursday (June 25) blacklisted four companies in Iran's metals sector, as well as one German and three Emirati subsidiaries of Iran's largest steelmaker that Washington said generate millions of dollars for Tehran's metals industry.

[Pompeo Says If UN Doesn't Extend Arms Embargo on Iran, US Will Seek Sanctions](#)

June 23, 2020, Fox News

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a press conference on Wednesday (June 24) that if the U.N. Security Council doesn't agree to extend the arms embargo against Iran, then the U.S. will seek to "snap back" multilateral sanctions on the regime.

[Iran Plans Oil Exports from the Gulf of Oman to Secure Crude Flow](#)

June 25, 2020, The Economic Times

Iran plans to export oil from a port on its Gulf of Oman coast by March, the president said on Thursday, a shift that would avoid using the Strait of Hormuz shipping route that has been a focus of regional tension for decades.

[Iran Investigates Large Explosion Near Key Military Site](#)

June 26, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

Iranian authorities said they were investigating an explosion in the early hours of Friday (June 26) at a Defence Ministry facility east of Tehran, near a site that has been crucial for Iran's development of missiles and munitions.

[US State Dept Defended India on Iran Oil Import, Trump Was Unmoved: Bolton](#)

June 23, 2020, Business Standard

Former US national security advisor John Bolton has criticised the State Department for defending India's position on import of oil from Iran, while claiming at the same time that President Donald Trump had "not been sympathetic" to New Delhi's case.

Israel

[Netanyahu Presents Case for Annexation of West Bank before American Crowd of Evangelicals](#)

June 29, 2020, Haaretz

In virtual speech to 'Christians United for Israel' PM Netanyahu refers to settlements in the West Bank as 'integral part of the historic Jewish homeland,' of 'your heritage and of our common civilization'.

[UN Chief Urges Israel to Abandon West Bank Annexation Plans](#)

June 24, 2020, UN News

The UN Secretary-General has called on Israel to scrap plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, a move that could occur as early as next week.

[India Increases Tech Surveillance on Ladakh LAC with Israeli Heron Drones](#)

June 23, 2020, Hindustan Times

In a stand-off with a belligerent Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) at four points in East Ladakh, India has increased technical drone surveillance of the area even as the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has inducted more battalions into the sector to support army along the 3,488 km Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Jordan

[Jordan Warns Israel of Harsh Response to Even Minimal Annexation of West Bank](#)

June 29, 2020, Times of Israel

Jordan has reportedly made clear to Israel that it will not accept even a limited annexation of West Bank land and will respond to any such move in the same way it would react to the unilateral annexation of all settlements and the Jordan Valley.

Kuwait

[41 Flights From Kuwait in Vande Bharat Phase Mission Phase IV](#)

June 29, 2020, Mathrubhumi

41 flight services have been scheduled from Kuwait to India in the phase IV of the Vande Bharat Mission, to evacuate stranded Indians from abroad amid COVID-19.

Lebanon

[Hezbollah Head Prefers China to IMF for Lebanon Bailout](#)

June 17, 2020, Asia Times

China is prepared to invest in key infrastructure projects in Lebanon should the crisis-hit country embrace the East, Hezbollah Chief Hassan Nasrallah announced.

Oman

[16 More Repatriation Flights from Oman to India](#)

June 25, 2020, Times of Oman

As part of its Vande Bharat Mission, India has announced 16 more flights in phase 4 which begins from July 1 onwards, Indian Embassy said on Thursday (June 25).

Qatar

[Qatar Calls for Implementation of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty](#)

June 28, 2020, The Peninsula Qatar

Qatar called for the intensification of international efforts at the legal, political and popular level in order to implement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as soon as possible.

[Qatar Participates in Arab Ministerial Meeting on Libya](#)

June 23, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Qatar on participated in the Arab ministerial meeting on the Libyan crisis, the country's official QNA news agency reported. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Sultan al-Muraikhi represented his country in the meeting held via video conferencing system.

Saudi Arabia

[Indian Pilgrims Will Not Travel to Saudi Arabia for Haj 2020](#)

June 23, 2020, Hindustan Times

The government has decided that Muslims from India will not travel to Saudi Arabia for Haj 2020 after the kingdom conveyed that pilgrims should not be sent this year in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Tuesday (June 23).

[Saudi Oil Exports Down By \\$12 Billion Year on Year in April 2020](#)

June 25, 2020, The Economic Times

The value of Saudi Arabia's oil exports dropped by 65.4 per cent in April when compared to the same month a year earlier, or a fall of about \$12 billion, official data showed on Thursday (June 25).

[US Removes Saudi Arabia from List of Worst Human Traffickers](#)

June 25, 2020, CNN International

The United States has removed key ally Saudi Arabia from its list of the worst offenders on human trafficking after just a year.

Syria

[Russia Quits UN Agreement which Protects Hospitals in Syria](#)

June 26, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Russia has announced its decision to quit a voluntary UN agreement that aims to protect hospitals, medical facilities and humanitarian aid deliveries in Syria. Under the agreement, the locations of such facilities are shared with the conflicting parties in a bid to prevent them from being hit by air-strikes and artillery fire.

[Nine Iran-backed Fighters Killed in 2nd Syria Raid in 24 Hours](#)

June 28, 2020, Arab News

Air strikes targeting positions of Iran-backed militias in eastern Syria killed nine fighters on Sunday in the second such raid in 24 hours, a war monitor said. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Israel was "likely responsible" for the strikes near the Iraqi border.

Turkey

[Turkey Can Use Right of Self-defense in Mediterranean](#)

June 28, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Turkey has the right to intervene if a ship under its protection is attacked in the Mediterranean Sea, said a Turkish expert. As tensions heighten in the region every day due to the Libyan crisis and the hydrocarbon reserves in the Mediterranean, so have policies and interventions.

UAE

[In 2020's Biggest Energy Deal, Six Global Firms Strike \\$20 Billion Agreement with Abu Dhabi State Oil Giant](#)

June 23, 2020, CNBC News

A consortium of six global investors has entered into a \$20.7 billion agreement with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), the state-owned oil company said Tuesday (June 23).

[UAE-India Repatriation: 59 Flights to be Operated in July as Vande Bharat Mission Enters Phase 4](#)

June 27, 2020, Khaleej Times

Fifty-nine repatriation flights for stranded Indians in the UAE will be operated in July as the Vande Bharat Mission enters Phase 4. More private chartered flights will also be sanctioned to meet the demand from the Gulf region, the Indian government has said.

Yemen

[UN Warns Abandoned Full Oil Tanker off Yemen Could Explode](#)

June 26, 2020, Oilprice.com

A tanker with 1 million barrels of oil, which has been moored off the Yemeni coast for five years, could explode or sink, the United Nations (UN) warned, in the latest warning that an environmental disaster and potential disruption of oil shipping routes around the Red Sea is waiting to happen.



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