



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

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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Abstract

China has been showing greater interest in the geopolitics of West Asia. On July 6, 2020, China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) held its 9th ministerial meeting via video conferencing. The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Hussein Abdullah Al-Safadi, and attended by foreign ministers or ministerial-level officials of all member states of the Arab League including Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit. China proposed closer cooperation in the following areas: i) Strengthening cooperation and unity to defeat Covid-19, ii) Firm support and joint defence of fairness and justice (China thanked Arab states for support on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang, iii) Uphold multilateralism and improve global governance, iv) Advance BRI cooperation and join hands in pursuing national rejuvenation, v) Promote political dialogue for the security of the Middle East.

In a major regional development Iran and China have finalized \$400 billion "Strategic Accord" which will expand military cooperation (weapons development and intelligence sharing) in return China will get discounted oil for the next 25 years. This document is yet to be approved by the Iranian parliament. Meanwhile, Iran has been rocked by a series of blasts in the past few weeks. On July 10, 2020, a blast occurred in Western Tehran resulting in power failures in two residential areas. As per Iranian assessment, these appear to be the handiwork of Israeli intelligence.

On July 06, 2020, Israel launched Ofek-16 satellite that will provide surveillance and military intelligence to the Israeli Defence Forces and is likely to be used for monitoring nuclear activities of Iran.

The US CENTCOM Commander Gen. Frank McKenzie met the Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to request for maintaining some US forces in the country, for continuing their joint fight against the ISIS. This request comes in the wake of upcoming bilateral dialogue over the future of US troops in Iraq. In other major news from Iraq, analyst Al-Hashemi an expert on ISIS and Al-Qaeda activities was assassinated outside his home on July 06, 2020. He had recently shifted his focus on Iran-backed militias in Iraq.

The UK which suspended arms sales to Saudi Arabia last year following a London court ruling regarding violation of international human rights in the on-going war in Yemen, reportedly resumed arms sales to Saudi Arabia. On the economic

front, Saudi Arabia presented six-point business plan to revive the global economy as the President of G-20.

On July 10, 2020, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued an executive decree changing the status of Hagia Sophia museum to a mosque. The United States, Vatican and Russian Orthodox Church have strongly criticised this decision.

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

Bahrain

[Around 25,000 Indians Register To Repatriate From Bahrain: Report](#)

July 08, 2020, Moneycontrol

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, around 25,000 Indian workers in Bahrain have been registered under the 'Vande Bharat Mission' to return to their homes in India.

Egypt

[China Willing To Boost Cooperation with Egypt, Arab Countries in Fighting Covid-19](#)

July 09, 2020, CGTN

China is willing to strengthen cooperation with Egypt and Arab states in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic amid growing friendly ties between China and the Arab world, Chinese Ambassador to Egypt Liao Liqiang said.

Iraq

[Gunmen Target US Military Equipment in Iraq](#)

July 12, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Gunmen attacked and torched three large trucks carrying equipment and logistical materials for US forces in Iraq, south of Baghdad, on Saturday (July 11), according to Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.

[US Centcom Commander Discusses Security Ties in Visit To Iraq](#)

July 09, 2020, Al-Monitor

Head of United States Central Command Gen. Frank McKenzie, after meeting with Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in Baghdad said he is "confident" the Iraqi government will request some US forces to remain in the country.

[Top ISIS Analyst Husham Al-Hashemi Assassinated in Iraq](#)

July 08, 2020, Asia Times

Husham al-Hashemi, one of Iraq's foremost experts on armed extremist groups, was assassinated outside his home in the capital Baghdad on Monday (July 06) night. The 47-year-old rose to prominence owing to his expertise on ISIS and Al-Qaeda, but had recently shifted his focus to Iran-backed militias in Iraq.

Iran

[Iran Says World 'Must Respond' To Israel After Blast at Nuclear Site](#)

July 07, 2020, Times of Israel

Iran has called for action against Israel, following a recent blast at the Natanz nuclear facility. "This method Israel is using is dangerous, and it could spread anywhere in the world," government spokesman Ali Rabiei said during a press conference.

[Defying US, China and Iran Near Sweeping Trade and Military Partnership](#)

July 12, 2020, News 18

Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors, undercutting the Trump administration's efforts to isolate the Iranian government because of its nuclear ambitions.

[Major Explosion Rocks Iran Again, 3rd Blast in 3 Weeks](#)

July 10, 2020, The New York Times

An explosion rocked western Tehran early Friday (July 10), state media reported, causing widespread power failures in two residential areas and unnerving Iranians awakened for the third consecutive week by an early-morning blast.

[US Killing of Iran's General Qassem Soleimani 'Unlawful': UN Expert](#)

July 08, 2020, Al Jazeera

The US drone strike that killed Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani was "unlawful", the United Nations expert on extrajudicial killings concluded in a report on Tuesday (July 07).

Israel

[Hundreds Block Roads, Clash with Police in Tel Aviv after Economic Protests](#)

July 11, 2020, Times of Israel

Hundreds of people blocked roads and clashed with police in Tel Aviv Saturday evening (July 11) at the end of a mass protest that saw some 10,000 demonstrate against the government's economic policies during the coronavirus crisis.

[New York-based Rozenberg Family Named as Potential Buyer For Israel's Embattled El Al](#)

July 12, 2020, Haaretz

El Al has been stricken especially hard by the coronavirus pandemic, putting almost its entire staff on unpaid leave and cancelling all flights, saddling it with about \$350 million in refunds on top of \$1.3 billion debt.

[Inventor of Israel's Iron Dome Working on Finding a Coronavirus 'Game-Changer'](#)

July 12, 2020, Livemint

Daniel Gold is trying to replicate his Iron Dome (Missile Defence System) breakthrough in protecting Israel against COVID-19.

[Ofek 16: Israel Launches New Spy Satellite](#)

July 06, 2020, Al Jazeera

Israel has launched a new spy satellite that it said would provide high-quality surveillance for its military intelligence.

[Amid Iran Tensions, Israel Said To Ask US To Speed Up Delivery of Air Refuelers](#)

July 08, 2020, Times of Israel

Israel has asked the US Department of Defense to speed up delivery of its KC-46 Pegasus aerial refueling aircraft, as tensions rise with Iran.

Jordan

[Jordan Says Holding China-Arab States Cooperation Forum Shows Keenness To Boost Mutual Ties](#)

July 07, 2020, Xinhua Net

Jordan on Monday (July 06) said holding the 9th ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) shows the commitment of the Arab states and China to cooperation and achieving mutual interests.

Kuwait

[Closely Monitoring Kuwait's Expat Quota Bill, Says External Affairs Ministry of India](#)

July 12, 2020, Moneycontrol

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said that it is “closely monitoring” the status of Kuwait’s draft residency bill, which is aimed at expelling a bulk of foreigners from the country.

Lebanon

[Hezbollah Chief Nasrallah Slams Israel's Annexation Plans, Threatens US Ambassador To Lebanon](#)

July 08, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah slammed Israel's annexation plan on Tuesday (July 07) evening, claiming it is the most dangerous thing in the entire Middle East. He called for support for the Palestinians and mocked the US, claiming Hezbollah has been becoming stronger during the administration of US President Donald Trump.

Oman

[34 More Repatriation Flights Organised For Indians in Oman](#)

July 11, 2020, Times of Oman

Air India will organise additional 34 repatriation flights to Muscat, to bring home Indian nationals who wish to return to their country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Qatar

[Al Jazeera Violates US Law by Not Disclosing Ties with Qatari Royalty](#)

July 09, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Al Jazeera, a Qatari state-owned news agency that supplies Middle East news in English to millions of readers, has been accused of violating US transparency laws in a report issued by a former member of the US congress and endorsed by the United Arab Emirates.

[Qatar Participates in Global Summit to Discuss Impact of COVID-19 on Global Economy](#)

July 09, 2020, The Peninsula Qatar

The State of Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, participated in the virtual global summit of the International Labour Organization to discuss the economic and social impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), held during the period from July 1-9, 2020 via video conference.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia To Host Arab-Chinese Summit To Strengthen Political Ties](#)

July 08, 2020, The National

Saudi Arabia will host an Arab-Chinese summit to discuss further partnerships and cooperation with China, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, announced on Tuesday (July 07).

[United Kingdom To Resume Arms Sales To Saudi Arabia](#)

July 07, 2020, Financial Times

Britain is to resume arms sales to Saudi Arabia, despite concerns from campaigners that its weapons could be deployed to commit war crimes against civilians in Yemen.

[Saudi Arabia's 6-point Plan To Jumpstart Global Economy](#)

July 07, 2020, Arab News

Saudi Arabia, in its capacity as president of the G20 group of nations, has unveiled a six-point business plan to jump start the global economy out of the recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Saudi Arabia Looks To Double Riyadh's Population, Economy in 10 Years](#)

July 08, 2020, Gulf News

Through an investment programme and huge projects in various parts of the city, Saudi Arabia is looking to double the capital Riyadh's population and economy over the next 10 years, a top official said.

[Saudi Arabia Rules Out Financial Curbs on Expats](#)

July 07, 2020, Outlook

Saudi Arabia has denied reports of freezing bank accounts of expatriates whose financial dealings are higher than their wages, it was reported on Tuesday (July 07).

Syria

[Russia's Push To Reduce UN Cross-border Aid To Syria Fails](#)

July 09, 2020, Arab News

A Russian bid to get the United Nations to reduce cross-border humanitarian aid to war-torn Syria was voted down by the Security Council Wednesday (July 08), an official said.

[Coronavirus: Idlib's First Covid-19 Case Raises Fears For Syria Camps](#)

July 10, 2020, BBC News

A mainly rebel-held province in north-west Syria has confirmed its first coronavirus case, sparking fears of a devastating outbreak in crowded camps holding displaced people.

[Iran To Strengthen Syria's Air Defences As Part of New Military Deal](#)

July 09, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Iran and Syria have signed a new military cooperation agreement aimed at boosting existing ties between the two allies.

Turkey

[Turkey Vows To 'Liberate Al-Aqsa' After Turning Hagia Sophia To Mosque](#)

July 11, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed to "liberate al-Aqsa mosque" from Israel after "Resurrecting Hagia Sophia" as a mosque on Friday (July 10).

UAE

[UAE and China Look To Revive Bilateral Economic Activity Through Digital Expo](#)

July 11, 2020, Gulf News

The Ministry of Economy of the UAE and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), will together host the first China-UAE Economic and Trade Digital Expo, a platform designed to reinvigorate trade activities between the two countries as they seek to lay the foundations for bilateral trade in the new digital economy.

[Abu Dhabi Aims To Attract Skilled Expats by Making Life Cheaper](#)

July 09, 2020, The Economic Times

Abu Dhabi will bet on attracting technology firms and skilled workers to help its economy rebound early next year, after the twin setbacks of cheaper oil and the coronavirus pandemic battered the United Arab Emirates and the wider Gulf.

Yemen

[Saudi-led Alliance in Yemen Says Explosive Boats Destroyed in Red Sea](#)

July 09, 2020, Reuters

The Saudi-led military coalition fighting the Iran-aligned Houthi group in Yemen destroyed two explosive-laden boats in the Red Sea on Thursday (July 09), its spokesman said.



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