



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume II, Issue 37 | September 14, 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 37

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 37

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 | 15 |
| Yemen | 16 |

Abstract

West Asia is witnessing striking geopolitical shift in forsaking old rivalries and building new relations. On September 11, 2020, the U.S. President Donald Trump announced yet another historic peace deal to normalise diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and Kingdom of Bahrain. President Trump expects many other Arab and Muslim countries to follow the path shown by UAE and Bahrain in the coming future. Iran, Turkey and Lebanon's Hezbollah have however strongly condemned these peace deals. In a related development, the Israeli security establishment is seeking compensation package for the sale of F-35 to UAE. The options being examined include advancing the date for the supply of advanced American weapons systems to Israel by a year.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with Saudi Arabia's King Salman during which both leaders discussed the upcoming G-20 Summit to be chaired by Saudi Arabia on November 21 and 22. On the other hand, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif in Tehran on September 08 en route to Moscow for SCO meeting. Both ministers discussed regional strategic issues such as Chabahar and the peace process in Afghanistan.

Despite killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani by the US in January this year to deter Iran backed militias in West Asia, the U.S. CENTCOM Chief Gen. Kenneth McKenzie confirmed that the "attacks against American forces have increased in Iraq". He acknowledged, "The United States is reducing its troops in Iraq from 5200 to 3000 this month". On the regional security front, Iran began its three day annual military exercise in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz, named Zolfaghar-99. The exercise is aimed at "improving readiness in confronting foreign threats and possible invasion".

In another major development, the Intra-Afghan talks between Afghan Government and the Taliban to end 40 year old Afghan war began in Qatar's capital Doha on September 13. Minister of External Affairs, Dr. Jaishankar reiterated India's stand that "Peace process in Afghanistan must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled with respect for national sovereignty. The interests of minorities, women and vulnerable sections of the society must be addressed as also issues of violence across the country and neighbourhood need to be addressed".

In the field of technological cooperation, India, Israel and the United States have begun collaboration in joint development of the next generation emerging technologies, including a transparent, open, reliable and secure 5G communication network.

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

Bahrain

[President Trump Announces 'Peace Deal' Between Bahrain and Israel](#)

September 12, 2020, BBC News

Israel and Bahrain have reached a landmark deal to fully normalise their relations, US President Donald Trump has announced.

[Europeans Welcome Bahrain-Israel Normalization as Opening for Peace](#)

September 13, 2020, Times of Israel

European leaders welcomed Bahrain's decision to normalize ties with Israel, expressing hopes it would help advance the cause of peace in the region.

[Saudi Arabia and Bahrain to Allow all Israeli Flights to Use Airspace](#)

September 10, 2020, Times of Israel

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain will allow all flights to and from Israel to use their airspace in a significant change of policy, senior White House adviser Jared Kushner said Wednesday (September 09).

Egypt

[Egypt Plans to Send Two Communication Satellites into Orbit](#)

September 12, 2020, Arab News

Egypt is planning to launch two satellites in cooperation with China in 2021 and 2022.

[Unified Arab Policy Must be Adopted towards Turkey's Destructive Practices: Egyptian FM](#)

September 10, 2020, Arab News

It is necessary to implement a unified Arab policy towards Turkey's destructive actions in the Arab region, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said on Wednesday (September 09) during his Arab League ministerial committee meeting.

[Egypt Signs Protocol to Teach Chinese in Schools](#)

September 08, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Egypt and China signed a cooperation protocol to teach the Chinese language as a second optional foreign language in pre-university schools in the North African country. The agreement was signed in Cairo by Egyptian Minister of Education and Technical Education, Tarek Shawki, and the Chinese Ambassador to Egypt, Liao Liqiang.

Iraq

[Attacks on U.S. Troops in Iraq Have Increased, U.S. CENTCOM Commander Says](#)

September 11, 2020, NBC News

More than eight months after a barrage of rockets killed an American contractor and wounded four American service members in Kirkuk, Iraq, militia groups continue to target U.S. military bases in that country, and the frequency of those attacks has increased.

[CENTCOM Chief Says US Cutting Troops in Iraq to 3,000 This Month](#)

September 10, 2020, The Indian Express

The United States is reducing its troop presence in Iraq this month from 5,200 to 3,000, the top American commander for the Middle East Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said Wednesday (September 09), as President Donald Trump tries to make good on his campaign promise to get America out of "endless wars."

Iran

[Iran Says Bahrain Normalising Ties with Israel 'Shameful'](#)

September 12, 2020, Reuters

Iran said on Saturday (September 12) that Bahrain's move to normalise relations with Israel meant it would be complicit in Israeli policies which threatened regional security.

[EAM Dr. Jaishankar Meets Iranian Counterpart, Discusses Chabahar, Afghanistan](#)

September 09, 2020, The Indian Express

Two days after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his counterpart in Iran, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday (September 08) flew to Tehran and met Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and discussed the Chabahar port project and the situation in Afghanistan.

[UK, France and Germany Agree To Reject US Demand for Iran Snapback Sanctions](#)

September 10, 2020, The Guardian

Foreign ministers from the UK, France and Germany have agreed to hold out against US demands to snapback all UN sanctions on Iran, despite intensified pressure from the US specifically on the UK government to fall into line.

[Iran's Military Begins Expansive Annual Exercise amid Tensions with US](#)

September 10, 2020, Hindustan Times

Iran's military Thursday (September 10) began an expansive annual three-day exercise near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, with the manoeuvres taking place amid heightened tensions between the Islamic Republic and the US.

[Iran's Enriched Uranium Stockpile '10 Times Limit': IAEA](#)

September 05, 2020, BBC News

Iran now has more than 10 times the amount of enriched uranium permitted under an international agreement, the UN's nuclear watchdog says. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Iran's enriched uranium stockpile had reached 2,105kg (4,640lb).

Israel

[Israel Demands Compensation from US for Sale of F-35s to UAE](#)

September 07, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Israeli security establishment is now discussing the compensation package that Israel will demand, adding that among the options being examined is advancing the date for the supply of advanced American weapons systems to Israel by one year.

[Israel Hopes India, China Will 'Sort Things Peacefully'](#)

September 09, 2020, WION

Israel has hoped India & China will resolve things in a "peaceful" way even as tensions rise between the two Asian neighbours.

[Syrian Air Defences Thwart Israeli Attack On Aleppo](#)

September 11, 2020, Times of Israel

Syrian air defences thwarted an Israeli attack on Aleppo city, Syrian state television said on Friday (September 11).

[India, U.S. and Israel Collaborating in 5G Tech: Official](#)

September 08, 2020, The Hindu

India, Israel and the United States have begun collaboration in developmental area, and in the next generation of emerging technologies, including a transparent, open, reliable and secure 5G communication network. A collaboration in 5G is a just tip of the iceberg and a first step, according to US Agency for International Development (USAID) Deputy Administrator Bonnie Glick.

Jordan

[Jordan: Bahrain, Israel Normalisation Deal Not Welcomed](#)

September 12, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Jordan announced Saturday (September 12) that necessary steps to achieve a fair peace should come from Israel after Bahrain and Israel announced a normalization deal. Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said Israel should stop procedures to undermine the two-state solution and end its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands.

Kuwait

[Embassy in Kuwait Begins Registration for Indians without Valid Documents for Repatriation](#)

September 10, 2020, Mathrubhumi

The Indian Embassy in Kuwait has begun registration for Indian nationals who do not possess valid travel documents and are desirous of returning to India.

[Kuwait Deputy FM Meets New Indian Envoy in Kuwait](#)

September 10, 2020, MENAFN

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah held talks Thursday (September 10) with India's new Ambassador in Kuwait Sibi George.

Lebanon

[Lebanon's Hezbollah Condemns Bahrain's Move to Normalize Israel Ties](#)

September 12, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Lebanon's Iranian-backed Hezbollah group said on Saturday (September 12) it strongly condemned Bahrain's move to normalize ties with Israel as a "great betrayal" of the Palestinian people.

[Lebanon: EU Demands More 'Credible' Government before Second Phase of Funding](#)

September 13, 2020, WION

Before starting the second phase of funding for blast-hit Lebanon, the European Union's commissioner for crisis management has called for an urgent formation of a "credible" government.

Oman

[Oman's Daily Oil Production Rises 7.2 Per Cent in August: Ministry](#)

September 12, 2020, Muscat Daily

Oman's average daily production of crude oil increased by 7.2 per cent in August to 720,300 barrels per day (bpd) compared to the average daily output in July this year, according to the monthly report released by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

[Oman to Reduce Number of Expat Workers in Banks and Finance Companies](#)

September 08, 2020, Gulf News

Nasr bin Amer Al Hosni, the Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labour, Oman, held a meeting with HR officials of major banks, finance companies and money exchange companies where it was made clear that sub-contracting of expatriate employees was to be discontinued.

Qatar

[Afghanistan Peace Talks Open in Qatar, Seeking End to Decades of War](#)

September 12, 2020, The New York Times

The Afghan government and the Taliban are finally coming to the table, after repeated delays. But the violence continues, and the challenges are vast.

[Qatar Airways to Operate Flights to 11 Indian Cities for Limited Period](#)

September 06, 2020, The Peninsula Qatar

Qatar Airways will operate 'special flights' between Doha and 11 destinations in India effective from September 6 to October 24, 2020.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia's King Salman and India's Prime Minister Modi Discuss G20, Coronavirus](#)

September 09, 2020, Arab News

Saudi Arabia's King Salman held a phone call on Wednesday (September 09) with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Saudi Press Agency said in a statement. During the call, they reviewed the work of the G20 countries and the upcoming G20 Summit, which will be chaired by the Kingdom in November 2020.

[Yemen's Houthis Say 'Important Target' Struck in Saudi Capital Riyadh](#)

September 10, 2020, Al Jazeera

Yemen's Houthi rebels say they have struck an "important target" in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, using a ballistic missile and drones.

[The World's Richest Oil Company is Rethinking Its Global Ambitions](#)

September 03, 2020, CNN International

The coronavirus pandemic is upending the energy industry and pushing its top players to make big changes. That includes Saudi Aramco, the world's largest and most profitable oil producer.

Syria

[Missing Bengaluru Youth Helped Many Join ISIS, Killed in Syria, Says Probe](#)

September 13, 2020, The Indian Express

A business management graduate Faiz Masood belonging to a wealthy Bengaluru family who has been missing for around seven years and was suspected to have joined the Islamic State is now known to have been killed in Syria.

Turkey

[Turkey Denounces Bahrain-Israel Normalization Deal](#)

September 12, 2020, Daily Sabah

Turkey on Friday (September 11) strongly condemned the normalization agreement to establish diplomatic relations between Bahrain and Israel, saying the deal contradicts the commitments made under the Arab Peace Initiative and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

[Greece-Turkey Tensions: Greece Announces Military Boost](#)

September 12, 2020, BBC News

Greece has announced a significant weapons purchase as tensions with neighbouring Turkey rise. The new arms include 18 French Rafale fighter jets, four frigates and four navy helicopters, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said.

['Positive First Step': Greece Hails Return of Turkish Vessel](#)

September 13, 2020, Al Jazeera

Greek government calls the departure of the Oruc Reis from disputed waters in Eastern Mediterranean after weeks of tension 'a positive step'.

[Israel Says Turkey is a Bigger Threat Than Iran](#)

August 27, 2020, The Siasat Daily

Yossi Cohen, Director of Israel's Mossad made these comments when talking with his Egyptian, Emirati and Saudi counterparts.

[Turkey Gets Unprecedented Downgrade, Crisis Warning from Moody's](#)

September 13, 2020, The Economic Times

Turkey had its debt rating downgraded deeper into junk by Moody's Investors Service, which warned of a possible balance-of-payments crisis in assigning the lowest grade it's ever given to the country.

[Turkey Sanctions on Table for EU Meeting, France Says](#)

September 07, 2020, Euractiv

Turkey's escalating conflict with Greece and Cyprus will be the main subject at this month's European Council meeting, when sanctions will be considered against Ankara, France said on Sunday (6 September).

[Greece Refutes Reports of Talks with Turkey at NATO](#)

September 10, 2020, Ekathimerini

Diplomatic sources in Athens on Thursday (September 10) refuted reports suggesting that “technical talks” and an “exchange of ideas” had taken place between officials representing Greece and Turkey at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

UAE

[Arab League: Ministers Agree Not to Condemn UAE-Israel Deal](#)

September 09, 2020, Al Jazeera

Palestinian leaders won renewed Saudi support for Palestinian statehood on Wednesday (September 09) but failed to persuade the Arab League to condemn last month's normalisation deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

[US Assured UAE It Won't Back Israeli Annexation of the West Bank Before 2024](#)

September 13, 2020, Times of Israel

The Trump administration gave the UAE a commitment during normalization negotiations that Washington would not recognize Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank until 2024 at the earliest.

[UAE, India Should Have Open Sky Policy Instead of Air Service Agreement, Says Envoy](#)

September 09, 2020, Outlook

The UAE and India should have an open sky policy instead of an air service agreement between them, the Gulf nation's Ambassador to India Ahmed Al-Banna said on Wednesday (September 09), asserting that such a move would benefit airlines of both countries.

Yemen

[Saudi-led Coalition Attacks Houthi Positions in Yemen's Sanaa](#)

September 12, 2020, Al Jazeera

The Saudi-led coalition has launched 11 air raids on the positions of Houthi rebels in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, according to the Houthi-run Saba news agency.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org