



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume II, Issue 35 | August 31, 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 35

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 35

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt.....	2
Iraq.....	3
Iran.....	5
Israel.....	6
Jordan.....	7
Kuwait.....	8
Lebanon.....	9
Oman.....	10
Qatar.....	11
Saudi Arabia.....	12
Syria.....	13
Turkey.....	14
UAE.....	15
Yemen.....	16

Abstract

In a major boost to the Indian Air Force's (IAF) surveillance capabilities, India is likely to sign a deal to acquire two additional Israeli-made 'PHALCON' airborne early warning and control system (AWACS) aircrafts. In other developments on the security front, the Pentagon slammed Russian military for "provocative and aggressive behaviour" that injured U.S. troops in Eastern Syria following collusion between armoured vehicles.

In a historic milestone in the Arab-Israeli relations, on August 29, UAE's President abolished the federal law boycotting Israel. Following the Abraham Accord, UAE will also host Senior U.S. Presidential Advisor, Jared Kushner on August 31. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited West Asia in a bid to push more Arab countries normalise diplomatic relations with Israel. Commenting on Israel-UAE peace deal, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar said, "It has opened lots of opportunities at a time when ties between Delhi and Abu Dhabi are also growing".

In terms of energy security, Iraq delivered on its pledge to cut oil supply under the OPEC+ agreement. However, low oil prices and COVID-19 pandemic has led to ten percent increase in Iraq's poverty, while three million people can't buy enough food in the country. In another major development, China reportedly is still buying Iranian crude oil, circumventing U.S. sanctions. Saudi Aramco discovered two new oil and gas fields in the northern region of the Kingdom. In a sign of growing Chinese influence on the region, Chinese firm signed an engineering contract with Oman for the construction of Sultanate's first bitumen refinery with an investment of over USD400 million. However, Saudi Arabia suspended a project to build USD10 billion refinery and petrochemicals complex in China. On the regional economic front, on August 30, Qatar increased minimum wage of its workers by 25 percent to 1,000 Riyals (USD275) a month.

The geopolitical conflict in East Mediterranean shows no signs of abating. On August 26, Greece launched naval exercises with France, Cyprus and Italy amid row with Turkey over exploration of natural gas. Syria witnessed a major countrywide blackout as a result of "terrorist attack on Arab Gas Pipeline". While, Lebanon's President Michel Aoun called for the proclamation of "secular state" in the country; diplomat Mustapha Adib is likely to be Lebanon's next Prime Minister.

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain Tells Mike Pompeo There Must Be Two-state Solution for Israel-Palestine](#)

August 26, 2020, Arab News

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held closed-door meetings Wednesday (August 26) with Bahrain's royal family and top officials in the United Arab Emirates amid the Trump administration's push for Arab nations to recognize Israel.

Egypt

[East Mediterranean: Greece Ratifies Deal with Egypt; Turkey to Hold Drills](#)

August 27, 2020, Al Jazeera

Greece has ratified an accord on maritime boundaries with Egypt; hours after Turkey extended the operation of a seismic survey vessel in the Eastern Mediterranean and said it will hold firing exercises in the region next week.

Iraq

[Iraq Interested in Buying Russian Weapons and Warplanes, Including Su-57](#)

August 24, 2020, AMN

Iraq is interested in purchasing infantry vehicles and Su – 57 aircrafts from Russia in a bid to boost Baghdad-Moscow military ties, Imad Al-Zuhairi, the military inspector for the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, said on Sunday (August 23).

[Shiites Mark Ashura in Iraq's Karbala Despite Coronavirus](#)

August 30, 2020, France 24

Thousands of tearful Shiite pilgrims wearing gloves and face masks flooded Iraq's holy city of Karbala Sunday (August 30) to mark Ashura, one of the largest Muslim gatherings since the Covid-19 pandemic started.

[Iraq Cuts Oil Exports in August, Pumps Below Opec+ Target](#)

August 28, 2020, The Economic Times

Iraq's crude oil exports have fallen so far in August, according to shipping data and industry sources, suggesting OPEC's second-largest producer is delivering more of its pledge to cut supply under an OPEC-led deal.

[UN Envoy: Pandemic Increased Poverty in Iraq By Over 10%](#)

August 27, 2020, Republic World

The U.N. envoy for Iraq said Wednesday (August 26) the coronavirus pandemic has made things worse in the country, with a ten percent increase in poverty and 3 million people who can't afford to buy enough food.

[Deliberate Silencing of Peaceful Voices in Iraq 'Unacceptable', Says UN Human Rights Chief](#)

August 27, 2020, UN News

A new UN report launched on Thursday (August 27) highlights human rights violations and abuses that were committed during recent demonstrations in Iraq and calls for immediate action for justice.

[UN Convoy Hit by Explosion in Northern Iraq](#)

August 27, 2020, AL-Monitor

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who heads the UN's Iraq mission, told the UN Security Council via videoconference that an improvised explosive device had detonated near the convoy.

[Saudi Foreign Minister Discusses 'Growing Relations' With Iraqi PM](#)

August 27, 2020, Arab News

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister has praised the Kingdom's "deep" ties with Iraq during a meeting with Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in Baghdad.

Iran

[Chinese Data Shows Beijing Continues Iranian Oil Imports](#)

August 27, 2020, Oilprice.com

Official Chinese data showed this week that China imported 120,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil from Iran in July as Beijing returns to reporting crude imports from the Islamic Republic after reporting no such imports for June.

[Kamala Harris Vows Support For Israel and Protection against Iran](#)

August 26, 2020, USA Today

Sen. Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for Vice President, told a virtual fundraiser Wednesday (August 26) that Joe Biden's administration would offer unwavering support for Israel and would never let Iran obtain a nuclear weapon.

Israel

[India to Acquire Two More "Phalcon" Airborne Early Warning Systems from Israel](#)

August 27, 2020, Swarajya

In a move to bolster the Indian Air Force's (IAF) surveillance capabilities, India is going to sign the long pending deal to acquire two additional Israeli-made 'PHALCON' airborne early warning and control systems (AWACS) aircraft from Israel.

[UAE-Israel Deal Has Opened 'Lots of Opportunities': S Jaishankar](#)

August 26, 2020, Hindustan Times

The normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has opened up "lots of opportunities" at a time when ties between New Delhi and Abu Dhabi too are growing, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

[Israel Responds to Explosive Balloons With Tank Fire on Gaza](#)

August 30, 2020, Arab News

The Israeli military said it struck militant targets in Gaza early on Sunday (August 30) in response to continued launches of explosives-laden balloons out of the Hamas-run territory.

Jordan

[Jordan Releases Cartoonist Held Over UAE-Israel Accord Drawing](#)

August 30, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Jordan on Sunday (August 30) decided to release a cartoonist held for drawing a cartoon mocking a recent deal to normalize relations between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel.

Kuwait

[Kuwait's Government to Discuss Changes in Debt Law Sought by Parliament - Finance Minister](#)

August 30, 2020, Zawya

The Kuwaiti government will discuss proposed amendments to a long-debated debt law, including reducing the oil-exporting nation's debt ceiling, Finance Minister Barak Ali Al-Shitan told parliament on Sunday (August 30).

Lebanon

[Mustapha Adib on Course to Be Designated Lebanon PM](#)

August 30, 2020, Al Jazeera

An influential group of former Lebanese prime ministers has picked little-known diplomat Mustapha Adib to head the country's next government, all but ensuring his appointment at a nomination process on Monday (August 31).

[President Calls for Proclamation of 'Secular State'](#)

August 30, 2020, France 24

Lebanon's President Michel Aoun called Sunday (August 30) for the proclamation of a "secular state" during a televised address to mark the upcoming centenary of the Lebanese state.

[France: Lebanon Risks Collapse Post Explosion](#)

August 27, 2020, The Tribune

Lebanon is in such a deep political and economic crisis that the country risks collapsing altogether, France's foreign minister said on Thursday (August 27).

Oman

[Chinese Firm Wins \\$400 million Contract for Oman's First Bitumen Refinery Project](#)

August 28, 2020, Zawya

Marking a key milestone in the implementation of a long-awaited and strategically vital project, an Oman-based company has signed a contract with a well-known Chinese engineering contracting firm for the construction of the Sultanate's first bitumen refinery with an investment of over \$400 million.

[Mike Pompeo Meets Oman's Sultan on Last Leg of Middle East Tour](#)

August 27, 2020, Reuters

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met the Sultan of Oman on Thursday (August 27) as part of a Middle East tour following a U.S.-brokered deal on normalising relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Qatar

[Qatar Raises Minimum Wage, Lifts Curbs on Changing Jobs](#)

August 30, 2020, Reuters

Qatar announced changes to its labour laws on Sunday (August 30), raising the minimum wage by 25 percent to 1,000 riyals (\$275) a month and scrapping a requirement for workers to get permission from their employers to change jobs.

[India-Qatar Travel Bubble Extended Until October 31](#)

August 27, 2020, Gulf Times

India-Qatar air bubble transport arrangement has been extended until October 31 or until the resumption of scheduled services, whichever is earlier, Indian Embassy in Doha said on Thursday (August 27).

[Qatar, China Cooperate in Digital Water-saving Irrigation](#)

August 17, 2020, Xinhua Net

Qatar's NAAAS Group has signed an agreement with China's Ningxia University and a Chinese company to introduce into the Middle East country digital water-saving irrigation technology and equipment developed by the university.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Aramco Discovers Two New Oil and Gas Fields](#)

August 30, 2020, Arab News

Saudi Aramco has discovered two new oil and gas fields in the northern regions, the kingdom's energy minister said on Sunday (August 30).

[Saudi Aramco suspends \\$10bn China Oil Refinery Deal](#)

August 21, 2020, Al Jazeera

Saudi Arabia's state oil company has suspended a deal to build a \$10 billion refining and petrochemicals complex in China, according to people familiar with the matter, as the company slashes spending to cope with low oil prices.

Syria

[ISIS Blamed For Syria Pipeline Attack](#)

August 24, 2020, Al Jazeera

Syria's oil minister says explosion targeting three power stations was a 'terrorist attack'.

[UN Syria Talks Resume After Coronavirus Cases Forced Suspension](#)

August 27, 2020, Al Jazeera

The United Nations has said talks aimed at rewriting the Syrian constitution have resumed after a three-day pause caused by positive cases of coronavirus among four participants.

[Pentagon Slams Russia for 'Provocative and Aggressive Behaviour' That Injured US Troops in Syria](#)

August 27, 2020, CNN International

The Pentagon slammed Russia's military on Thursday (August 27) for what it called "deliberate provocative and aggressive behaviour" that injured multiple US military personnel following a collision between American and Russian armoured vehicles in eastern Syria.

Turkey

[Turkey Warns of 'War' in East Mediterranean as Tension Mounts Over Greece's Aggressive Actions](#)

August 30, 2020, Daily Sabah

Turkey has pointed to aggressive actions mounted by Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly the country's attempt to double its territorial waters in the Ionian Sea from 6 to 12 nautical miles, warning that such steps would be considered a "cause for war."

[France Joins Greece's Naval Exercises amid Turkey Row](#)

August 26, 2020, Deutsche Welle

Greece launched military exercises with France, Italy, and Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean on Wednesday (August 26), amid an escalating conflict with Turkey over natural gas reserves.

[EU Set To Discuss Sanctions against Turkey](#)

August 29, 2020, Arab News

Brussels is set to discuss sanctions against Turkey at a meeting of EU leaders next month, as the country began firing exercises in contested waters of the eastern Mediterranean on Saturday (August 30).

[Like Hagia Sophia, Turkey to Reconvert Chora Museum into Mosque](#)

August 27, 2020, Deutsche Welle

The reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque sparked criticism around the world. Now the Erdogan government wants to do the same with the Chora Museum, a former Byzantine church, alarming historians and Christians.

UAE

[UAE to Receive US-Israeli Delegation Led by Jared Kushner on Monday \(August 31\)](#)

August 30, 2020, The National

A US-Israeli delegation led by White House senior advisor Jared Kushner will visit the UAE on Monday (August 31). The visit follows the Abraham Accord, the August 13 "trilateral announcement and roadmap towards joint co-operation" between the UAE and Israel.

[UAE's Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Issues a Decree to Abolish the Israel Boycott Law](#)

August 29, 2020, Gulf News

Following the announcement of the peace accord with Israel, UAE's President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has issued a Federal Decree - Law No. 04 of 2020, abolishing the Federal Law No. 15 of 1972 regarding boycotting Israel and the penalties thereof.

[DMCC to Strengthen UAE-India Trade Ties Through Agriculture](#)

August 27, 2020, Gulf Today

Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) - has launched Agriota E-Marketplace, a technology-driven agri-commodity trading and sourcing platform that uses blockchain to help bridge the gap between millions of rural farmers in India and the UAE's food industry.

Yemen

[Arab Coalition Forces Intercept Houthi Ballistic Missile Fired At Saudi Arabia from Yemen](#)

August 28, 2020, Arab News

Arab coalition forces intercepted a ballistic missile launched by the Houthi militia in Yemen towards Najran in Saudi Arabia on Thursday (August 27).

[Yemen's Southern Separatists Withdraw From Riyadh Peace Deal](#)

August 26, 2020, Al Jazeera

Yemen's southern separatists say they have withdrawn from talks over a Saudi-sponsored power-sharing deal with the internationally recognised government in the latest setback for the troubled process.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org