



# 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

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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

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## Abstract

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan once again stoked the Kashmir issue by raising it in his address to the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Pakistan thanked Turkey for this show of solidarity with the Kashmiris; while, India termed Erdogan's remarks as "completely unacceptable" and asked Turkey to "respect sovereignty of other nations." On the other hand, Turkey's dream of establishing Neo-Ottoman Empire is leading to reckless aggression across the Middle East. Syria's Foreign Minister al-Moallem accused Turkey of being "main terror sponsor" in the region and said it is guilty of "war crimes and crimes against humanity" for cutting water to more than dozen towns that resisted Turkish occupation. Turkey has also shown solidarity with Azerbaijan in its ongoing conflict with Armenia. Reportedly, Turkey is sending militants from northeast Syria to Azerbaijan amid the ongoing border skirmishes with Armenia. In another development, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Jordan formally established the 'East Mediterranean Gas Forum' hosted by Cairo.

In order to boost defence exports and achieve export target of USD5 billion in the next five years, Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD), on September 24<sup>th</sup>, organized a webinar and expo on the theme 'Indian Defence Industry Global Outreach for Collaborative Partnership' with Israel. Creation of Sub-working group (SWG) on 'Defence Industrial Cooperation' was also announced between India and Israel; the main objective of 'SWG' will be transfer of technology, Co-development and Co-production, Artificial Intelligence, Innovation and Joint Export to friendly foreign countries. Israel's Start-up Nation Central and India's International Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCreate) also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will bring together entrepreneurs from both countries to accelerate collaboration on start-ups and innovation. While, UAE reached out to India over a deal for 93,895 carbines for the Indian Army that will be manufactured by its state-owned entity, Caracal.

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval attended Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's 90<sup>th</sup> National Day celebrations, reflecting the importance attached by India to its relations with the Gulf nation. In a related development, the low crude oil prices in the international market have helped India fill its strategic oil reserves during April-May 2020. In the process, the country has saved USD685.11 million (INR5069 Crores).

In an important political development, Saudi Arabia formally announced 'G20 Riyadh Summit' to be held virtually on November 21 and 22 this year.

On the regional security front, the Trump Administration warned Iraqi Prime Minister Barham Salih that the U.S. could close its embassy in Baghdad if the militia attacks against American bases and convoy continued. In the continuing Iran-Saudi Arabia quarrel, their cold war reached the United Nations General Assembly where Saudi King Salman called for "united front against Iran and stopping it from getting weapons of mass destruction." In response, Iran accused Saudi Arabia of being the "main sponsor of terror" in the region. In another development, Saudi Arabia sought Russian intervention in the on-going war in Yemen, especially in preventing strategically important city of 'Marib' from falling in the hands of the Houthi rebels.

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

## Bahrain

### [Bahrain Says Foiled 'Terrorist Attack Backed by Iran in Early 2020](#)

September 20, 2020, Reuters

Bahrain's interior ministry said on Sunday (September 20) it had foiled a "terrorist attack" early this year that was backed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

### [First Direct Commercial Flight from Israel Lands in Bahrain](#)

September 23, 2020, Outlook

The first known direct commercial flight from Israel to Bahrain landed in the island kingdom, just a week after the two countries signed a deal to normalise relations.

## Egypt

### [East Mediterranean States Formally Establish Egypt-based Gas Forum](#)

September 22, 2020, Arab News

Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Jordan established the 'East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF)' as an intergovernmental organization in a virtual ceremony hosted by Cairo.

### [Egypt Boasts Record Crude Oil Production](#)

September 24, 2020, Oilprice.com

Egypt has recently announced its crude oil production has exceeded 650,000 barrels per day (bpd) for the first time since the late 1950s.

## Iraq

### [Iran Slams US and Israel in High-level Meetings with Iraq](#)

September 27, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Iran is pushing Iraq to expel US troops, but is wary of carrying out attacks that could cause casualties to US personnel stationed in its western neighbourhood. On Saturday (September 26), Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein met with senior Iranian officials during a trip to Iran in what was first major face-to-face meetings in a while due to the Covid-19 crisis.

### [Kerala Man, Trained by ISIS in Iraq, Found Guilty of 'Conspiracy to Wage War' Against India](#)

September 25, 2020, The Week

An Indian national, trained by ISIS in 2015 in Iraq, was found guilty by a court in Kochi on Friday (September 25) for hatching a criminal conspiracy to wage war against the governments of India and Iraq. Subahani Haja Moideen, a Keralite, was arrested by the NIA in 2016 following a crackdown in Tamil Nadu with the help of central security agencies.

### [OPEC+ Pressures Iraq, UAE to Further Cut Oil Production](#)

September 17, 2020, Al-Monitor

Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members held a virtual meeting with Russia and other allied oil producers to discuss the continuing low price of oil amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Iran

### [US Shakes Up Iraqi Factions with Reported Warning on Militias](#)

September 25, 2020, AL-Monitor

The Trump administration has warned Iraqi President Barham Salih that it could close its US Embassy in Baghdad if the militia attacks against its bases and convoys continue.

### [Iran Hits Back at 'Delirious' Saudi Arabia after King Salman's UN Speech](#)

September 24, 2020, Al Jazeera

In response to a fiery UN speech by King Salman, Iranian officials brand Saudi Arabia as the main sponsor of 'terrorism' in the region.

### [Officials: Iran Weighing Plot to Kill U.S. Ambassador to South Africa](#)

September 13, 2020, Politico

According to the U.S. intelligence sources, Iranian government is considering an assassination attempt on the American ambassador to South Africa, reported a U.S. government official familiar with the issue.

### [U.S. to Announce More Iran Sanctions, Top Envoy Says](#)

September 24, 2020, Reuters

The United States will slap new sanctions on a number of Iranian officials and entities including a judge who sentenced Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari to death, U.S. Special Representative for Iran and Venezuela Elliott Abrams told a hearing at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

### [Chinese Envoy: U.S. Unilateral Announcement on Return of UN Sanctions on Iran Illegitimate](#)

September 21, 2020, CGTN

Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, on Sunday (September 20) expressed opposition to the U.S. unilateral announcement on the return of UN sanctions on Iran.

## Israel

### [Israeli Defence Forces Successfully Test Sea-to-Sea Missile System](#)

September 25, 2020, The Economic Times

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) announced Friday (September 25) that it has conducted a successful test of a new sea-to-sea missile system. The IDF said in a statement that the system was designed to "ensure Israel's continued naval superiority".

### [India's Ministry of Defence Holds Webinar with Israel on Defence Industry Global Outreach for Collaborative Partnership](#)

September 25, 2020, PIB India (Ministry of Defence)

This webinar is the first in the series of webinars which will be organized with friendly foreign countries in order to boost defence exports and achieve India's defence export target of \$5 billion in the next five years.

### [Israel and India Sign MoU to Collaborate in Tech Innovation & Start-ups](#)

September 22, 2020, The Economic Times

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Israel's Start-Up Nation Central and India's International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCreate) to initiate a bilateral program to accelerate innovation and technology cooperation between start-ups and corporates from both countries.

### [Israel and Lebanon to Launch Direct Maritime Border Talks, Report Says](#)

September 26, 2020, Times of Israel

After years of on-and-off negotiations, Israel and Lebanon have reportedly agreed to launch high-level, direct talks aimed at demarcating a maritime border.

## Jordan

### [Arab, European Ministers Call on Palestine, Israel to Resume Peace Talks](#)

September 25, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Egypt, France and Germany called on Thursday (September 24) for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and restarting peace negotiations. This came at a press conference following a meeting held by the foreign ministers and the European Union (EU)'s representative to discuss the Middle East peace process, aired on national television.

## Kuwait

### [Moody's Downgrades Kuwait on Liquidity Squeeze, Weak Governance](#)

September 23, 2020, The Economic Times

Moody's downgraded Kuwait's rating citing higher liquidity risks and weaker governance and institutional strength, as the Gulf state, battered by low oil prices, struggles to pass a law allowing it to issue international debt.

## Lebanon

### [Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Quits in Blow to French Initiative](#)

September 26, 2020, Reuters

Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib quit on Saturday (September 26) after trying for almost a month to line up a non-partisan cabinet, dealing a blow to a French plan aimed at rallying sectarian leaders to tackle the worst crisis since the nation's 1975-1990 civil war.

### [Lebanon Blast Caused Damage Up to USD 4.6 Billion, Says World Bank](#)

August 31, 2020, The New Indian Express

The massive explosion in Beirut earlier in August that killed and injured thousands of people has caused up to USD 4.6 billion in physical damage, the World Bank said in a report.

## Oman

### [Oman's Oil Exports Resilient on China Demand Despite Pandemic](#)

September 23, 2020, Muscat Daily

In the face of the global recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, Oman's oil exports have shown resilience during the first eight months of this year. The robust demand for Oman's crude in China, the biggest destination for the sultanate's oil shipments, kept Oman's exports nearly steady during the January–August period of 2020.

## Qatar

### [Qatar Airways Says Losses Have Reached \\$1.9 Billion amid Pandemic, Boycott](#)

September 27, 2020, The Economic Times

Long-haul carrier Qatar Airways on Sunday (September 27) reported revenue losses of \$1.9 billion for the past year, blaming the coronavirus pandemic, its liquidation of shares in Air Italy and the ongoing boycott of Doha by four Arab nations for the drop.

## Saudi Arabia

### [Saudi Arabia To Hold Virtual G20 Summit on November 21-22](#)

September 28, 2020, Reuters

The G20 leaders' summit will be held virtually on Nov. 21-22 in Saudi Arabia as the COVID-19 pandemic thwarted Riyadh's hopes of hosting the gathering in the kingdom to boost its international standing.

### [Saudi Arabia Seeks Russia's Help to Prevent Marib Falling into Houthi Hands](#)

September 22, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Saudi Arabia has asked Russia to intervene and help prevent the strategic city of Marib from falling into the hands of Yemen's Houthis.

### [Jaishankar, Doval, Naqvi Attend Saudi Arabia's National Day](#)

September 24, 2020, Hindustan Times

At a time when diplomatic receptions are a rarity, both External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval attended Saudi Arabia's national day, reflecting the importance attached by India to its ties with the kingdom.

### [India Tops Up Strategic Reserves With Cheaper Crude, Saves Over \\$685m](#)

September 23, 2020, Gulf News

Taking advantage of low prices in major oil-producing centres in Saudi Arabia and UAE, India has filled up its strategic crude oil reserves to meet its energy needs in times of emergency and saved a neat \$685 million in the process.

### [Saudi King Salman Assails Iran in United Nations Address](#)

September 23, 2020, Reuters

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz took aim at Iran during his debut speech at the annual United Nations General Assembly meeting of world leaders, calling for a united front to contain Riyadh's rival and stop it from getting weapons of mass destruction.

### [OPEC Turns 60 At 'Critical Moment' for Coronavirus-hit Oil](#)

September 27, 2020, Livemint

OPEC faces a critical moment in its 60-year history with the coronavirus crushing crude oil demand and prices, discord among its members, and threats from a world seeking cleaner fuels.



## Syria

### [Syrian Foreign Minister Calls Turkey 'Main Terrorism Sponsor' in the Region](#)

September 27, 2020, The Week

Syria's foreign minister accused Turkey on Saturday (September 26) of being one of the main sponsors of terror in his country and the region, and said it is "guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity" for cutting water to more than a dozen towns that resisted Turkish occupation.

### [US to Provide \\$720 Million Syria Aid, \\$108 Million for South Sudan](#)

September 24, 2020, Arab News

The United States said on Thursday (September 24) it would provide more than \$720 million in humanitarian assistance for the response to the crisis in Syria and nearly \$108 million for South Sudan.

## Turkey

### [Turkey is Transferring Syrian Militants to Azerbaijan as Hostilities against Armenia Increases](#)

September 25, 2020, Greek City Times

Credible reports have emerged that Turkey is transferring its militant proxies based in northern Syria to Azerbaijan as tensions and skirmishes with Armenia rapidly increase.

### [Pakistan Lauds Turkish Leader for Raising Kashmir at United Nations](#)

September 23, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Pakistan's prime minister Wednesday (September 23) thanked the Turkish president for raising the Kashmir issue during his speech to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). "Deeply appreciate President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan once again raising his voice in support of the rights of the Kashmiri people during his address to UNGA," Imran Khan tweeted.

### [India Terms Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Remarks on Kashmir as "Completely Unacceptable"](#)

September 23, 2020, The Economic Times

India has termed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's remarks on Kashmir during his United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) speech as "completely unacceptable", and advised Ankara to "learn to respect the sovereignty of other nations".

## UAE

### [Amidst F-35 to UAE Rumors, Esper Pledges to Support Israeli Edge](#)

September 23, 2020, DefenceNews.com

Amidst expectations that the U.S. will sell F-35 joint strike fighters to the United Arab Emirates, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper on Tuesday (September 22) reaffirmed his commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge.

### [Expecting F-35 Deal in Weeks, Israel Seeks Downgraded Jet For UAE - Report](#)

September 26, 2020, Times of Israel

Israeli officials believe the US and the United Arab Emirates are likely to seal an arms deal in the next few weeks that will see Washington supply the Gulf state with advanced F-35 stealth fighters.

### [UAE Govt Reaches Out To India Over Carbine Deal, Firm Offers to Manufacture Rifles Locally](#)

September 21, 2020, The Print

The UAE government has reached out to India over a deal for 93,895 carbines for the Indian Army that will be manufactured by its state-owned entity, Caracal.

## Yemen

### [Yemen's Warring Parties Agree to Their Largest Prisoner Swap as U.N. Seeks Ceasefire](#)

September 27, 2020, Reuters

The U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen wants to build on Sunday's (September 27) announcement of the largest prisoner exchange agreement in the five-year conflict to pave the way for a national ceasefire and a political solution to end the war.



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