



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume II, Issue 41 | October 12, 2020

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

India-Israel bilateral relations have strengthened during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. On October 5, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a telephone conversation with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi; the two leaders "discussed bilateral cooperation to combat COVID-19 with emphasis on technological cooperation and testing." According to Israel's Ambassador to India, "with Israel and UAE normalising diplomatic relations, there is an excellent possibility for a new trilateral bloc, 'Israel-India-UAE', to emerge in West Asia." Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi also spoke with India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar about bilateral cooperation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his best wishes to Kuwait's new ruling emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the crown prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah. India followed this up by sending petroleum and natural gas minister, Dharmendra Pradhan to Kuwait to offer condolences of the Indian people on the demise of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile the Islamic State (IS) continues to pose major national security threat to India. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) busted a 14-member module of the IS that returned from war torn Syria and Iraq, while arresting two of its alleged operatives.

On the regional security front, Qatar made a formal request to the United States for the purchase of F-35 stealth aircraft. Earlier in September, the U.S. officials had spoken about naming "Qatar as a 'Major Non-Nato Ally' (MNNA)." In the wake of these developments, "Israel is likely to oppose any sale of the F-35 aircraft to Qatar with a view to maintaining Israeli qualitative military edge in the region." The Turkish drones are playing a crucial role in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh. This adds to President Erdogan's hard power strategy in the region; conversely, Canada suspended exports of military drone technology to Turkey, citing concerns over its use by Azerbaijan against Armenia. In the East Mediterranean, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ratified a maritime deal demarcating sea boundary with Greece for the exploration of oil and gas in the exclusive economic zone.

The United States imposed new sanctions on 18 Iranian banks, as Washington seeks to increase pressure on Tehran. Earlier, the Iranian Rial reached its lowest value ever at 300,000 rials per US Dollar. In rebuke to the U.S., China reiterated its

commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA 2015), while Foreign Minister Wang Yi “proposed a regional multilateral dialogue forum in West Asia (Middle East) to de-escalate tensions.” Reportedly, Wang Yi also stated that “support to the JCPOA would be a pre-condition of entry to this new multilateral forum in West Asia.”

Saudi Arabia will host the G20 Summit on November 21 and 22. The European Parliament has however urged the EU leadership to snub ‘Riyadh G20 Summit’ citing several cases of gross human rights violation by Saudi Arabia. In a positive development in the otherwise unstable India-Turkey relations, the electromechanical work of the recently inaugurated and strategically important ‘Atal Tunnel’ on the Leh-Manali Highway was undertaken by the Turkish firm Savronik.

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

## Bahrain

### [India, Bahrain Discuss Strengthening of Bilateral Cooperation in Financial, Business Sector](#)

October 05, 2020, BW Business World

India's new Ambassador to Bahrain met Bahrain's Minister of Finance and National Economy Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa on Sunday (October 04) and discussed bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Several ways to strengthen India-Bahrain cooperation in the financial and business sectors were deliberated during the meeting between the two dignitaries.

## Egypt

### [Egypt's President Signs Strategic Maritime Deal with Greece](#)

October 10, 2020, The New Indian Express

Egypt's President ratified a maritime deal setting its Mediterranean Sea boundary with Greece and demarcating an exclusive economic zone for oil and gas drilling rights.

### [Egypt to Host Next Palestine Factions Meeting](#)

October 06, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The heads of the Palestinian factions will meet in Cairo within weeks, Turkish agency Anadolu reported quoting Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee member Bassam Al-Salhi.

### [United States Commits Nearly \\$23 Million to Support Economic Governance and Women's Empowerment in Egypt](#)

October 07, 2020, US Embassy in Egypt

The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) added \$22.8 million to the five-year Inclusive Economic Governance bilateral assistance agreement. In line with Egypt's Vision 2030, this funding is intended to improve the investment environment and empower women to join in the labour force.

## Iraq

### [14-Member Islamic State \(IS\) Module that Returned 'Disillusioned' from Iraq and Syria Busted: NIA](#)

October 08, 2020, Hindustan Times

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has busted a module of the so-called Islamic State (IS) and arrested its two alleged operatives, Ahmed Abdul Cader, 40, and Irfan Nasir, 33, from Bengaluru on Wednesday (October 07). The agency has found at least 13-14 people from Bengaluru travelled to Iraq and Syria in 2013-14.

### [US Reveals List of Shia Militia Sites It Plans to Strike in Iraq](#)

October 09, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The United States has compiled a list of 80 sites linked to Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and presented it to the government in Baghdad. The Americans have told the Iraqi government that they will target the sites and close the US Embassy if the militias are not reined in.

### [Iraq Forms High Commission to Probe Attacks on Diplomatic Missions](#)

October 07, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Iraqi Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, formed a supreme committee headed by National Security Adviser, Qassem Al-Araji, and a number of other government officials to investigate the recent attacks on diplomatic missions across the capital Baghdad.



## Iran

### [Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi Proposes Regional Dialogue to Defend UN's Effort to Address Iran Nuclear Issue](#)

October 11, 2020, CGTN

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Saturday (October 10) all parties concerned should join a regional multilateral dialogue in West Asia (Middle East) as part of efforts to implement a 2015 UN resolution and reach a proper solution to the Iran nuclear issue.

### [U.S. Issues Additional Sanctions against Iranian Banks](#)

October 08, 2020, The New York Times

The Trump administration on Thursday (October 08) imposed a new round of economic sanctions against Iran's financial sector, as Washington seeks to increase pressure on Tehran in the weeks leading up to the Presidential election.

### [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA 2015\) Very Much Alive: IAEA](#)

October 11, 2020, Tasnim News Agency

Iran does not have enough enriched uranium to make one nuclear bomb under the UN atomic watchdog's official definition, the IAEA's head said, adding also that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal is "very much alive".

### [Shahid Beheshti Port in Iran, Built By India, Has Handled 12 Lakh Tons of Cargo since 2018: MEA](#)

September 23, 2020, Zee News

Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar in Iran, constructed by India, has handled 12 lakh tons of cargo and 8200 containers since December 2018, the Ministry of External Affairs has told the lawmakers in Parliament.

## Israel

### [Israel, India Agree to Continue Cooperation in Fight against COVID-19](#)

October 05, 2020, BW Business World

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday (October 05) spoke to "his friend" Prime Minister Narendra Modi and agreed to continue cooperation in the fight against the coronavirus.

### [Excellent Possibility for India-Israel-UAE Trilateral in West Asia: Israel's Ambassador to India](#)

October 10, 2020, The Economic Times

"India, Israel and the UAE have an excellent possibility to form a trilateral bloc in West Asia in the backdrop of the peace deal and the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the UAE", Israeli ambassador to India, Ron Malka said.

### [Israel Sets Its Sights on the Red Sea and Bab El-Mandeb](#)

October 06, 2020, Middle East Monitor

As the magnitude of the Israeli normalisation of relations with the Gulf become clearer, especially at the military and strategic levels, the most important benefit is the possible Israeli access to the military bases in the Gulf, and Bab El-Mandab, under the pretext of fighting terrorism. This will expand Israel's military and strategic influence in the region.

### [Israel to "Immediately" Bring over 2,000 Ethiopian Jews](#)

October 10, 2020, Outlook India

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has told his Ethiopian counterpart that his country has the intention to "immediately" bring over some 2,000 Ethiopian Jews.

## Jordan

### [Jordan, Israel, Sign Agreement Allowing Commercial Flights to Use Airspace](#)

October 08, 2020, Gulf News

Jordan and Israel on Thursday (October 08) signed an agreement allowing commercial flights to pass through both countries' airspace after years of negotiations.

### [Jordan's Safadi, India's External Affairs Minister Talk Ties over Phone](#)

October 06, 2020, Zawya

Jordan's Foreign Minister in the caretaker government Ayman Safadi and his Indian counterpart S. Jaishankar on Monday (October 05) discussed ways to boost Jordanian-Indian cooperation, especially addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its ramifications.

## Kuwait

### [India Sends Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to Kuwait to offer Condolences on Demise of Former Emir](#)

October 11, 2020, Financial Express

Reflecting the importance it places on ties with Kuwait, India on Sunday (October 11) dispatched Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to offer condolences to the leadership of the Gulf nation on the passing away of its former Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

### [India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi Extends Best Wishes to Kuwait's New Emir](#)

October 09, 2020, WION

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday (October 09) offered his best wishes to Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for assuming charge as Kuwait's emir and also to the new crown prince, and expressed confidence that India-Kuwait friendship will be further strengthened.

### [Kuwait's New Crown Prince Pledges Commitment to Democracy and Peace](#)

October 08, 2020, The Economic Times

Kuwait's new Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah took the oath of office in parliament on Thursday (October 08), pledging the Gulf Arab state's commitment to democracy and peace and calling on Kuwaitis to shun divisions.

## Lebanon

### [Lebanon's Former PM Saad Hariri Warns of Civil War](#)

October 10, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri warned of the imminent danger of a civil war in the country.

## Oman

### [Oman, India Discuss Ways to Boost Relations in Transport, IT Sector](#)

October 08, 2020, Times of Oman

The Omani Minister for Transport, Communications and Information Technology discussed with the Indian ambassador bilateral relations in Transport, Communications and IT sectors as well issues of mutual interest between the two countries and ways to improve them.

## Qatar

### [Qatar Makes Formal Request to the US for F-35 Stealth Aircraft: Report](#)

October 07, 2020, Middle East Eye

Qatar has submitted a formal request to buy US-made F-35 fighter jets according to a media report. "As a matter of policy, the United States does not confirm or comment on proposed defence sales or transfers until they are formally notified to the Congress," a State Department official said."

### [Israel Will Oppose Any U.S. F-35 Sale to Qatar, Israeli Minister Says](#)

October 11, 2020, Reuters

Israel will oppose any U.S. sale of F-35 warplanes to Qatar, Israel's intelligence minister said on Sunday (October 11), citing a need to maintain Israeli military superiority in the region.

### [Turkey's Erdogan Arrives in Qatar for Talks with Sheikh Tamim](#)

October 07, 2020, Al Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has arrived in the Qatari capital Doha for talks with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

## Saudi Arabia

### [European Parliament Urges EU to Snub Saudi G20 Summit](#)

October 08, 2020, Deutsche Welle

MEPs approved a wide-ranging resolution that condemns Saudi human rights abuses and urges the European Union to downgrade its representation at the upcoming 'Riyadh G20 Leaders' Summit to avoid legitimizing human rights violations.

### [Saudi Arabia Must Focus on own Interests, National Security While Serving Palestinian Cause - Saudi Ambassador to the United States](#)

October 08, 2020, Reuters

Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief and Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, said the kingdom must focus on its own interests and security while supporting the Palestinian cause.

### [1,583 Indians Repatriated From Saudi Arabia: Indian Embassy](#)

October 08, 2020, Livemint

"The third and fourth flights of the second batch of deportees arrived at New Delhi and Lucknow, respectively from Saudi Arabia. With this, the total number of deportees that have been repatriated in the second batch has reached 1,162," a statement from the Embassy of India in Riyadh said.

### [Kerala-based Lulu Group in Talks with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund to Sell Minority Stake](#)

October 07, 2020, The New Indian Express

Public Investment Fund (PIF) - the Saudi Arabian sovereign fund is in talks to buy a minority stake in the INR55,800 crore turnover Lulu Group.



## Syria

### [Bashar al-Assad: No talks with Israel without Return of Golan Heights to Syria](#)

October 08, 2020, Times of Israel

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said in an interview with Russian state news that peace talks with Israel would only take place if the Israelis return the 'Golan Heights' to Syria.

### [After Blast in Syrian Town, US Says Rise in Attacks Troubling](#)

October 08, 2020, Arab News

The US on Wednesday (October 07) said it was troubled by a recent rise in attacks in Syria, a day after a blast in the northwest town of Al-Bab killed at least 11 people.

### [Syrian President Bashar al-Assad Blames Turkey for Fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenian](#)

October 06, 2020, Reuters

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad accused Turkish President Erdogan of being the main instigator in the deadliest fighting between Armenian and Azeri forces for more than 25 years.

## Turkey

### [Turkey's Armed Drones Bolster Erdogan's Hard-Power Tactics](#)

October 08, 2020, Financial Times

The expanding Turkish drone industry is the culmination of a two-decade drive to boost defence production with the aim of reducing Turkey's reliance on western arms purchases and stoking national pride.

### [Turkey Develops Domestic Satellite Terminals for Drones](#)

October 09, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Turkish information technologies firm CTech has begun to deliver SATCOM On-The-Move (SOTM) terminals for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as of July.

### [A Turkish Connection to Atal Tunnel](#)

October 05, 2020, The Economic Times

The 'Atal Tunnel' on the Leh-Manali Highway recently inaugurated by PM Modi has a Turkish connection. The electromechanical works of the Tunnel was undertaken by a Turkish firm Savronik which has track record of infrastructure projects in Turkey and other countries.

### [Canada Suspends Exports of Military Drone Technology to Turkey](#)

October 05, 2020, CBC

The federal government of Canada is suspending the export of sophisticated Canadian drone technology to Turkey while Ottawa investigates claims that it is being used by the Azerbaijani military against Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh

### [US 'Deeply Concerned' with Reports about Turkey's Possible S-400 System Tests](#)

October 07, 2020, The Economic Times

The US State Department said it was concerned about reports on possible tests by Turkey of Russian S-400 air defence missile systems.

## UAE

### [China, UAE to Jointly Seek New Progress in Strengthening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Senior Chinese Diplomat](#)

October 10, 2020, Global Times

China will work together with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to seek new progress in deepening their comprehensive strategic partnership, visiting senior Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi said on Saturday (October 10) in Abu Dhabi.

### [NIA Says Gold Smuggling Aimed at Damaging India-UAE Ties](#)

October 06, 2020, Deccan Herald

Opposing the bail of the accused in Kerala gold smuggling case, the NIA on Tuesday (October 06) stated before the NIA special court in Kochi that two key accused in the case were held by UAE authorities and the gold smuggling case had the tendency to affect India-UAE relations, security of India, including economic security.

### [US, UAE May Agree on F-35 Deal by December 2020](#)

September 22, 2020, Al Jazeera

UAE could be the first Gulf state to possess the F-35 stealth aircraft, as US studies deal that is also acceptable to Israel. An agreement could be in place in time by December 02, National Day of the UAE.

## Yemen

### [Yemen: UN Calls for Ceasefire as Clashes Resume in Hodeidah Port](#)

October 08, 2020, Al Jazeera

The United Nations is calling for an immediate end to clashes near Yemen's main port of Hodeidah after a surge in fighting that sources said has killed dozens of people despite a UN-sponsored ceasefire in place in the area.

### [Yemen's Houthi Rebel Group Bans WhatsApp](#)

October 09, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Yemen's Houthi rebel group has banned and criminalized using WhatsApp application in the south-western Ibb province which is under its control.



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