



# 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

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)



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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

Saudi Arabia released a new 20 Riyal bank note depicting India's Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir as a separate entity. This note was issued to commemorate the Kingdom's G20 presidency. India strongly objected to this "gross misrepresentation of India's territorial boundaries on official and legal bank note of Saudi Arabia, urging Saudi Arabia to take urgent corrective steps."

In another development, Middle East is witnessing a sharp rise in Anti-French sentiment in the aftermath of President Macron's remarks in favour of the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad as part of freedom of expression. India stood strongly with France and criticised Turkey and Pakistan for their personal attacks on the French President Emmanuel Macron. In a related development, during a statement in an open debate in the UNSC "India urged concerned parties in the Middle East to completely stop support to the terrorist organizations like ISIL (Islamic State of the Iraq and Levant) and others."

On the regional security front, Trump administration notified the U.S. Congress about its intent to sell around 50 F-35 Stealth Aircrafts to the UAE worth USD10 billion. Reports also suggest that, the U.S. is likely to sell F-22 Raptor and precision guided bombs to Israel. In a major development, a bipartisan bill is to be introduced in the U.S. Congress that would require the United States to consider selling 'Bunker Busting Bombs' to Israel which can penetrate heavily fortified underground facilities.

The Russian air-force carried out a major airstrike in Northwest Syria (Idlib province) on October 26, killing 56 fighters from Turkey-backed rebel group. During an address to the Turkish Parliament, President Erdogan "threatened to launch a new military offensive in northern Syria, if the Kurdish armed groups were not cleared from areas along the Turkey-Syria border; Erdogan also remarked that air-strikes in Idlib indicate "Moscow isn't looking for peace in the region."

The U.S. imposed new sanctions on Iran's oil sector, while selling 1.1 million barrels of seized Iranian crude bound for Venezuela. In another development, it also seized missiles (guided anti-tank missiles, surface-to-air missiles and various other missile components being shipped to Yemen. Meanwhile, in an important development, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) acknowledged that, Iran was building an underground advanced centrifuge assembly plant.

In terms of bilateral relations, India's Ministry of Defence (MoD) organized a webinar titled 'Indian Defence Industry Global Outreach for Collaborative Partnership: India-UAE Defence Cooperation'. Such webinars are also being organized with other friendly countries to boost defence exports and achieve defence export target of USD5 billion over the next five years. On the economic front, Bahrain and India discussed ways to enhance opportunities in pharmaceuticals and alternative medicine. India also extended air-bubble agreement with Qatar until December 31, 2020.

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

## Bahrain

### [Bahrain, India Discuss Opportunities in Pharmaceuticals and Alternative Medicine Sector](#)

October 28, 2020, The Daily Tribune (News of Bahrain)

Bahrain and India discussed ways to enhance opportunities in pharmaceuticals and alternative medicine. This Webinar was organized by the Indian Embassy and Pharmexcil with the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry and National Health Regulatory Authority.

### [U.S. Defence Secretary Mark Esper Meets with Bahraini, U.S. Military Leaders](#)

October 29, 2020, US Department of Defence

Mark Esper met with King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and thanked the Bahraini monarch for his country's support of the American presence in the region.

## Egypt

### [U.S. Calls on Egypt to Not Use China Telecoms Infrastructure](#)

October 26, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The United States has called on the Egyptian government not to allow Chinese companies to help establish the country's 5G telecommunications infrastructure. In an official statement, the American embassy in Egypt urged Cairo to join the U.S. "Clean Network" programme to obtain 5G from what it described as "reliable partners".

### [Egypt Swoops in Saudi Markets amid Boycott of Turkish Products](#)

October 29, 2020, AL-Monitor

Egypt is trying to substitute Turkish products with Egyptian products in Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to exploit the popular boycott campaign launched by the Saudis against Turkish products in light of the Turkey-Saudi tensions.

## Iraq

### [India Calls for Complete Ceasing of Support to Terrorist Forces in the Middle East](#)

October 27, 2020, BW Business World

Underlining that political instability, long-festering conflicts, sectarian divides, issue of refugees and terrorism continue to plague the Middle East, India on Monday (October 26) called on concerned parties in the region to completely stop support to terrorist forces like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and others.

### [Saddam Hussein's Right-Hand Man Dies After Years as Fugitive](#)

October 26, 2020, The Guardian

Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's right-hand man, 'Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri', a long-time fugitive, has died, according to the late Iraqi dictator's daughter and his Ba'ath party.

### [Brazil Soars to China's No. 3 Crude Oil Supplier in September, Overtakes Iraq](#)

October 25, 2020, Business Standard

Brazil jumped to China's third-biggest crude oil supplier in September import data showed on Sunday (October 19), as China's independent refiners scooped up cheap supplies of the South American exporter's relatively high quality oil.

### [Two Killed in Gas Pipeline Explosion in Southern Iraq](#)

October 31, 2020, BW Business World

Two children were killed and 28 people injured in a gas pipeline explosion in southern Iraq, the Iraqi military and an oil official said on Saturday (October 31). The incident took place when a gas pipeline detonated near the 44th Brigade of the paramilitary Hashd Shaabi at al-Najmi area in Muthanna province in south of Baghdad.



## Iran

### [Iran Imposes New Restrictions as Coronavirus Deaths Surge in Third Wave](#)

November 01, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Weddings and conferences will be banned in the Iranian capital until further notice as the Middle East's hardest-hit nation battles a third wave of COVID-19, police said on Saturday (October 31).

### [U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Iran's Oil Sector](#)

October 26, 2020, The New York Times

The U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions on Iran's Ministry of Petroleum, the National Iranian Oil Company and its oil-tanker subsidiary for providing financial support to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the elite military unit that is designated as a terrorist group by the United States.

### [U.S. Seizes Iranian Missiles, Slaps Iran-related Sanctions on 11 Entities](#)

October 29, 2020, Reuters

The United States revealed on Thursday (October 29) it had seized Iranian missiles shipped to Yemen and sold 1.1 million barrels of previously seized Iranian oil that was bound for Venezuela, in the Trump administration's latest move to increase pressure on Tehran.

### [Satellite Photos Show Activity at Iran's Natanz Nuclear Facility](#)

October 28, 2020, The Guardian

Iran has begun construction at its Natanz nuclear facility, satellite images show, and the UN's nuclear agency (IAEA) has acknowledged that Tehran is building an underground advanced centrifuge assembly plant after its last one exploded in a reported sabotage attack last summer.

### [Iranian Activists Claim Regime Has Hidden Nuclear Facility](#)

October 15, 2020, Arab News

Ali Safavi, a member of Iran's parliament in exile, said on Wednesday (October 14) that Iran has built a nuclear weapons site that it has been hiding from the rest of the world in violation of international law.

[Iran Could Regain Its Oil Market Share If Biden Wins in The United States](#)

October 30, 2020, Tehran Times

Wall Street banks including Goldman Sachs Group Inc., JP Morgan Chase & Co., and RBC Capital Markets LLC see one million barrels per day (bpd) or more of Iranian crude supplied to the market next year if Joe Biden wins.

[US Claims Iranian Hackers Accessed Voter Information](#)

October 31, 2020, AL Jazeera

United States officials said that Iranian hackers it accused of sending threatening emails sent to thousands of Americans earlier this month had successfully accessed voter data. The emails appeared to be from the far-right Proud Boys group and asked voters to vote for Donald Trump in the upcoming elections.

## Israel

### [Benny Gantz, Mark Esper Meet for 3rd Time in a Month, This Time in Tel Aviv, on Arms Sales](#)

October 29, 2020, The Times of Israel

Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz lauded an agreement signed with the United States last week, saying it ensured Israel has the capabilities necessary to confront the threats it faces, during a visit to Tel Aviv by US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper on Thursday (October 29).

### [President Trump Approves F-22 Raptor Sale to Israel](#)

October 30, 2020, Asharq AL-Awasat

Mark Esper informed the Israeli officials that President Donald Trump has approved the sale of F-22 Raptor fighter jets and precision-guided bombs, according to senior sources in Tel Aviv.

### [US Senators Push to Sell Bunker-busting Bombs to Israel](#)

October 29, 2020, AL Jazeera

Two bipartisan House legislators will introduce a bill in the US Congress that would require the US Department of Defence (DoD) to consider selling Israel bunker-buster bombs capable of penetrating heavily fortified underground facilities, one of the bill's sponsors announced on Tuesday (October 27).

### [US Passports to List 'Israel' for Birth in Jerusalem](#)

October 29, 2020, Deccan Herald

The United States said Thursday (October 29) that its citizens born in Jerusalem will be able to list Israel as their place of birth, after President Donald Trump recognized the contested holy city as the Jewish state's capital.

## Jordan

### [Saudi-Jordanian Investment Fund Given Green Light to Work](#)

October 29, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Jordan is reported to have granted permission for the establishment of the Saudi-Jordanian Investment Fund. The fund has the right to own, develop, operate, manage and exploit certain specific projects worth at least \$5 billion. The projects include constructing the national railway system which would connect the Jordanian capital, Amman, with the port city of Aqaba.

## Kuwait

### [SC Asks Centre to Take Further Steps to Bring Back Remaining Indians Stranded in Kuwait](#)

October 27, 2020, Financial Express

The Supreme Court on Tuesday (October 27) asked the Centre to take steps to bring back remaining Indians stranded in Kuwait amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has said that out of 1.3 lakh citizens who had enrolled for the repatriation with its Embassy, over 87,000 have already been brought back.

## Lebanon

### [Lebanon, Israel Hold Second Round of Maritime Demarcation Talks](#)

October 28, 2020, AL Jazeera

Lebanon and Israel, still technically at war and with no diplomatic ties, launched a second round of maritime border talks under United Nations and United States auspices to allow for offshore energy exploration.

## Oman

### [Population of Indians in Oman Falls Below Half Million: Report](#)

October 29, 2020, The Tribune

The population of Indian expats in Oman has reduced to 499,431 due to the government's "Omanisation process" and the coronavirus pandemic which have forced a large number of Indians to return home.

## Qatar

### [Qatar-India Air Bubble Extended Until December 31: Indian Embassy](#)

October 28, 2020, Gulf Times

The air bubble arrangement between Qatar and India has been extended until December 31, the Indian embassy said on Twitter on Wednesday (October 28). "We thank the civil aviation authorities of India and Qatar. Our efforts to facilitate movement between India and Qatar continue," the embassy tweeted.



## Saudi Arabia

### [India Urges Saudi Arabia to Take 'Corrective Steps' Over Depiction of J&K in G20 Bank Note](#)

October 30, 2020, Hindustan Times

India conveyed its 'serious concern' to Saudi Arabia over the depiction of J&K in bank note. The banknote, a new 20 Riyal currency, was released on October 24 to commemorate Saudi Arabia's presidency of organizing the G-20 on November 21-22. The new Saudi currency note shows Jammu and Kashmir as a separate entity.

### [Man Arrested in Saudi Arabia After Alleged Knife Attack at French Consulate](#)

October 29, 2020, The Guardian

Saudi Arabian police have arrested a man outside the French consulate in Jeddah after he allegedly stabbed a guard, amid heightened anti-France sentiment across the Muslim world and apparent terrorist attacks in two French cities.

### [Saudi Arabia Allows Foreign Pilgrims to Enter for Umrah](#)

November 01, 2020, AL Jazeera

Some 10,000 foreign pilgrims are arriving in Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah after a seven-month pause because of the coronavirus pandemic. The pilgrims must isolate for three days after arrival before being transported to religious sites, according to Amr Al-Maddah, deputy minister of Hajj and Umrah.

## Syria

### [Russian Air-Strikes Kill 34 Turkey-backed Rebels in Syria](#)

October 26, 2020, WION

Air strikes by Russia killed 56 fighters from a Turkey-backed rebel group in northwest Syria on Monday (October 26). Russian warplanes also wounded 100 people when they targeted a training camp in Idlib province.

## Turkey

### [India Slams Turkey and Pakistan for Attacks on French President Emmanuel Macron](#)

October 29, 2020, The Indian Express

India on Wednesday (October 28) came out in support of France's President Emmanuel Macron, whom Pakistan and Turkey have targeted for strongly defending the French people's right to freedom of expression.

### [Very Real Risk of Sanctions against Turkey Over S-400, US Says](#)

October 29, 2020, Daily Sabah

A U.S. official on Wednesday (October 29) claimed that Turkey runs the risk of sanctions after it tested Russia's S-400 air defence system. "That risk is very real because they ... continue to pursue the S-400," said R. Clarke Cooper, the top State Department official in charge of arms sales.

### [French President Macron Criticises Turkey's 'Imperial Inclinations' as Row Between Countries Escalates](#)

November 01, 2020, The Guardian

The French President Emmanuel Macron has accused Turkey of adopting a "bellicose" stance towards its NATO allies, saying tensions could ease if his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdoğan showed respect and did not tell lies.

### [President Erdogan Warns of Military Action in Syria, Decries Russian Strike](#)

October 28, 2020, AL Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened on Wednesday (October 28) to launch a new military operation in northern Syria if Kurdish armed groups are not cleared from areas along its border with Syria.

## UAE

### [India and UAE Agree to Advance Their Defence Cooperation](#)

October 29, 2020, Army Technology

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have agreed to deepen their defence cooperation via joint production and mutual trade. The two countries participated in a webinar titled, 'Indian Defence Industry Global Outreach for Collaborative Partnership: India-UAE Defence Cooperation', which saw participation from over 180 people.

### [UAE Cuts Spending in 2021 Federal Budget](#)

November 01, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The budget for next year was set at 58 billion dirhams (\$15.8 billion) down from this year's 61.35 billion dirhams, which was the largest budget since the establishment of the country.

### [US Moves Ahead with Sale of 50 F-35 Fighter Jets to The UAE](#)

October 29, 2020, Financial Times

The US State Department has notified Congress that it intends to sell 50 F-35 fighter aircrafts to the United Arab Emirates, after Israel agreed last week to drop its objections. The notification sent to Congress on Thursday (October 29) indicated sales could reach \$10bn.

### [Democrats Building Speed Bumps for F-35 Sale to United Arab Emirates](#)

October 31, 2020, Defence News

More Capitol Hill headwinds are greeting the Trump administration's fast-moving sale of 50 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to the United Arab Emirates, as Democrats on Friday (October 30) introduced a new bill to curb the sale.

## Yemen

### [Yemen on Brink of Losing Entire Generation of Children to Hunger, UN Warns](#)

October 27, 2020, AL Jazeera

Parts of Yemen are seeing their highest levels of acute malnutrition in children, heightening warnings that the country is approaching a dire food security crisis, the United Nations said in a report.

### [US Warns of Possible Houthi Missile Strikes on Saudi Capital Riyadh](#)

October 29, 2020, Middle East Eye

US officials warned of possible Houthi missile strikes on Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, after the kingdom reported it intercepted several armed drones and missiles fired by the rebel group in Yemen.



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