



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume III, Issue 4 | January 25, 2021

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 3, Issue 4

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.

© 2021 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 3, Issue 4

Contents

Abstract	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt	2
Iraq	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	6
Jordan.....	7
Kuwait.....	8
Lebanon.....	9
Oman	10
Qatar	11
Saudi Arabia.....	12
Syria	13
Turkey.....	14
UAE	15
Yemen.....	16

Abstract

Over the past few years, India has significantly strengthened its strategic partnership with the Gulf countries. To further deepen the United Arab Emirates-India strategic partnership, Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, V. Muraleedharan visited the UAE from January 19-21 and discussed wide ranging issues from trade, investment, connectivity, IT, space, and the welfare of the Indian community with UAE's Minister of State Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh. The two leaders also discussed the way forward in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) under the UAE's chairmanship. Mr. Muraleedharan also inaugurated centre for up-skilling the Indian workers in UAE in line with Prime Minister Modi's vision of 'skill, reskill and upskill'. In another development, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India reiterated the "upward trajectory" of relations between Riyadh and Delhi.

On the regional security front, twin suicide bombing attacks by ISIS at a crowded market in Iraq's central Baghdad on January 21, killed 32 people and wounded 110. India, opposing terrorism in all its forms, "unequivocally and in strongest terms condemned the attacks and expressed solidarity with the people of Iraq". Blasts highlight gaps in the Iraqi security, weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic, rivalry among armed groups, and continuous political tensions in the country. In another development, Greek scholars urged India and Greece to forge "strong security partnership to counter Turkey-Pakistan alliance". They also highlighted the prospects of "Greece acquiring weapons systems from India, while expressing optimism about Athens and Delhi jointly developing weapons systems".

In a move to meet its obligations under the OPEC+ agreement, Iraq has reduced supplies of the Basra crude oil to Indian refineries by up to 20 percent, in the coming year. In another important development, India supplied two mobile harbour cranes to Iran's 'Chabahar Port' with a total contract value of over USD25 million; this will enable seamless cargo handling services at this strategic port.

On the regional economic front, the Qatar Investment Authority to diversify its investments portfolio heavily weighted toward North America and Europe is eyeing countries in the east, including India, China, Malaysia, and Singapore. Further, Qatar showed its willingness to mediate between the United States and Iran, while remaining committed to engaging Tehran and other Gulf Arab countries in a "constructive dialogue". In a regional development with ramifications for the Indian migrant workers, Oman has barred expats from jobs

in sectors such as, insurance companies, shops and car dealerships, including finance, commercial and administrative positions.

Over the past few months, Israel-Iran conflict has escalated considerably in Syria. Reacting to this the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov has stated that, "Moscow refuses to allow Syria to be used as an arena for confrontation between Israel and Iran". Further Lavrov assured Israel that, "Russia will not allow threats and attacks to be directed against Tel Aviv from Syria". In another major development, Saudi Arabia thwarted air-attack on Riyadh allegedly launched by the Houthi rebels from Yemen. The United States strongly condemned the attack and stated that, "such attacks contravene the international law and undermine all efforts to promote peace and stability".

On the US – Israel relations, Biden administration has "vowed to consult Israel on all regional security matters". Further, Israel has allowed the 'Iron Dome Missile Defence Systems' to be deployed in the American bases in the Gulf countries. On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates signed contracts with the United States for the purchase of F-35 stealth fighters and MQ-9B reaper drones in the concluding days of the Trump administration.

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

Bahrain

[Israeli PM Netanyahu to Visit UAE, Bahrain in 3 Weeks](#)

January 23, 2021, Asharq Al-Awsat

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will make a three-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on February 9.

Egypt

[Egypt's Security Services bust Muslim Brotherhood Network in Cairo](#)

January 23, 2021, Arab News

Egypt's security services have announced the capture of a Muslim Brotherhood network in downtown Cairo. The network was led by a Turkish man and prepared negative reports that contained "false and fabricated information about the political, economic, security and human rights situations in Egypt".

Iraq

[Suicide Blasts Kill 32 People in Baghdad, ISIS Suspected](#)

January 21, 2021, The Arab Weekly

A rare twin suicide bombing killed 32 people and wounded 110 at a crowded market in central Baghdad on Thursday (Jan 21), Iraq's health ministry said, the city's deadliest attack in three years.

[Baghdad Suicide Blasts Expose Gaps in Iraq's Strained Military](#)

January 23, 2021, Arab News

Twin suicide blasts in Baghdad claimed by the Daesh group have exposed gaps within Iraq's security forces, weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic, rival armed groups and political tensions.

[India Strongly Condemns Twin Suicide Attacks in Iraq](#)

January 22, 2021, BW Businessworld

India strongly condemned the twin suicide attacks in Iraq's Tayaran Square on January 21 and expressed solidarity with the people of the Middle Eastern nation.

[Iraq Cuts Crude Oil Supplies For Most Indian Refiners in 2021](#)

January 22, 2021, The Economic Times

Iraq has reduced annual supplies of Basra crude oil to several Indian refiners by up to 20 per cent for 2021, industry sources said, in a rare move by OPEC's second-largest producer which is trying to meet its obligations under the group's production deal.

[Iraqi Cabinet Votes to Delay General Election until October 10](#)

January 19, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iraq's cabinet has unanimously voted to postpone the country's general elections to October 10, 2021.

Iran

[Iran's Zarif Open to Oil, Gulf Security Contacts with U.S., Not on Israel](#)

January 21, 2021, Reuters

Iran may cooperate with the United States on oil and security in the Gulf, but not on Israel, the Iranian foreign minister said in remarks.

[Middle East Leaders Praise Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign on Iran as Biden Takes office](#)

January 22, 2021, CNBC

UAE and Israeli politicians expressed approval for former U.S. President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran as President Joe Biden takes office.

[Israeli officials Concerned over Biden's Stance on Iran and Palestine](#)

January 22, 2021, Middle East Eye

Israeli officials expressed concern over the apparent intention of US President Joe Biden to re-join the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, as well as resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Israeli Army Radio, the statements made by new Secretary of State Antony Blinken in the Senate on Wednesday (January 20) did not allay Israel's fears.

[Twitter Suspends Fake Account of Iranian Supreme Leader after Apparent Trump Threat](#)

January 22, 2021, The Economic Times

Twitter suspended the fake account linked to Iran's Supreme Leader, hours after it carried the image of a golfer resembling former President Donald Trump apparently being targeted by a drone alongside a vow to avenge the killing of a top Iranian general in a U.S. drone attack.

[India Supplies Two Mobile Harbour Cranes to Iran's Chabahar Port](#)

January 18, 2021, Mint

India said it has supplied a consignment of two mobile harbour cranes to Iran's Chabahar port with a total contract value of over \$25 million. The move will enable the port to carry out seamless cargo handling services.

[On Biden's Inauguration Day, Iran Says 'Ball in U.S. Court' over Nuclear Dispute](#)

January 20, 2021, NBC News

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani urged the incoming U.S. administration to return to the 2015 nuclear agreement and lift sanctions on Tehran, while welcoming the end of "tyrant" President Donald Trump's era.

Israel

[Biden Administration Vows to Consult with Israel on 'all' Regional Issues](#)

January 24, 2021, Middle East Eye

In the first official contact between the new US administration and the Israeli government, President Joe Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan vowed to his Israeli counterpart that Washington will "closely consult with Israel on all matters of regional security".

[Israel Allows US to Deploy Iron Dome Missile Defence System in the Gulf: Report](#)

January 24, 2021, Middle East Eye

The United States is expected to soon begin deploying the Israeli-manufactured Iron Dome missile defence system in its bases in the Gulf States.

[With a Conflict over Iran Looming, Israel Sends a New Envoy for the post-Trump Era](#)

January 23, 2021, The Washington Post

Israel's new ambassador to the United States, Gilad Erdan began work this past week as his country braced for conflict with its most important ally.

[Despite High Vaccination Rate, Covid-19 Cases Surge in Israel](#)

January 23, 2021, The Indian Express

Although the total number of vaccines administered is considerably higher in countries like the US and China, Israel is recording the highest number of cumulative Covid-19 vaccination doses per 100 people, still the COVID-19 cases are rising.

[World Welcomes US President Biden, with Some Leaders Openly Expressing Relief](#)

January 20, 2021, The Times of Israel

In statements and tweets from across the world, Presidents and Prime Ministers congratulated Biden on entering office, signalling a willingness to work with the new administration on strengthening ties between the US and their respective countries.

Jordan

[Yemen's Warring Sides Resume Prisoner Swap Talks in Jordan](#)

January 24, 2021, Voice of America

Yemen's Houthi group and Saudi-backed government who have been at war for almost six years began fresh U.N.-backed negotiations on a prisoner exchange on Sunday (January 24), United Nations and Yemeni officials said.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Emir Re-appoints Prime Minister to Form New Cabinet](#)

January 24, 2021, The Economic Times

Kuwait's emir has reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as prime minister, after the cabinet resigned last week in a standoff with parliament over its vote to question the premier.

Lebanon

[Lebanon, Israel Reject Moving Maritime Border Talks to Europe](#)

January 8, 2021, Middle East Eye

Lebanon and Israel have rejected attempts to move maritime border demarcation talks to Europe. The attempted move comes after the indirect talks stalled in late November when negotiations reached an impasse.

Oman

[Oman Bars Expats from Certain Jobs amid Economic Downturn](#)

January 24, 2021, The Economic Times

Oman announced Sunday (January 24) it will bar expatriates from certain jobs in an effort to create more employment opportunities for its citizens amid an economic downturn.

Qatar

[Qatar's Wealth Fund has its Eye on India to Diversify from Europe, US](#)

January 19, 2021, Mint

Qatar's sovereign wealth fund is looking east for deals in an effort to diversify an investment portfolio heavily weighted toward North America and Europe. QIA's chairman declined to identify specific targets, mentioning only a list of locations such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, and China.

[Qatar Voices Readiness to Mediate between Iran, U.S.](#)

January 22, 2021, Tehran Times

Qatar is ready to mediate between Iran and the United States as the new U.S. President, Joe Biden, assumes office after the turbulent years of the Trump administrations, Lolwah al-Khater, spokeswoman for Qatar's Foreign Ministry, has said. She also pointed out that Qatar is committed to engaging in a "constructive dialogue" between Tehran and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia and India: The Upward Trajectory](#)

January 24, 2021, Outlook

The strategic partnership between Saudi Arabia and India is witnessing a new dawn, well illuminated in the cooperation between them during the testing times of Covid-19.

[Saudi Air-defences Thwart New Houthi Attack on Riyadh](#)

January 23, 2021, Arab News

Saudi air defences thwarted an attack on Riyadh on Saturday (January 23) by Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen. The Arab-led coalition in Yemen said it had "intercepted and destroyed a hostile air target going toward Riyadh."

[US Condemns Attack on Saudi Arabia](#)

January 25, 2021, Outlook

The United States on Sunday (January 24) strongly condemned the latest attack on Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh, stating that such attacks contravene international law and undermine all efforts to promote peace and stability.

[Saudi Arabia Remained China's Top Oil Supplier in 2020](#)

January 20, 2021, Oilprice.com

Saudi Arabia edged past Russia, shipping on average 1.69 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil to China, according to data from China's General Administration of Customs. Saudi oil exports to China grew by 1.9 percent year over year in 2020.

[Pakistan Names General Envoy to Saudi Arabia as Military Seeks Control of Ties](#)

January 20, 2021, Hindustan Times

Lt Gen Bilal Akbar has been named Pakistan's new envoy to Saudi Arabia, with the move signalling the military establishment's desire to take control of bilateral ties that have witnessed turbulence in recent months.

[Flagship Huawei Store in Saudi Arabia will be its Biggest Outside China](#)

January 16, 2021, Arab News

Chinese tech firm Huawei has signed an agreement with Kaden Investment for the launch in Saudi Arabia of its largest store outside China.

Syria

[Israeli Missiles Strike Syria's Hama Killing Four Civilians](#)

January 22, 2021, AL Jazeera

Syrian state media claims at least four civilians were killed when Israeli warplanes fired several missiles in the central Syria region of Hama early on Friday (January 22), adding that its air defence forces downed most of the missiles.

[Russia Will Not Allow Syria to be Arena for Israel-Iran conflict, Says Lavrov](#)

January 21, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Russia's Foreign Minister insists that Moscow refuses to allow Syria to be used as an arena for confrontation between Israel and Iran, as tensions continue to escalate in the country with Israeli air strikes on Iranian targets. Sergey Lavrov assured Israel that Russia would not allow threats and attacks to be directed towards it from Syria.

[Israel Said to Have Warned Syria during Russia-Sponsored Talks](#)

January 19, 2021, The Arab Weekly

Western diplomatic sources confirmed that a Syrian-Israeli meeting took place at the Russian Hmeimim base near the coastal city of Latakia. Syria, backed by both Iran and Russia, found itself in a difficult position, after Russians insisted on the meeting and Iran objected to the talks with the Israeli side.

Turkey

[Greek MPs Urge Strong Security Partnership with India to Balance Turkey-Pakistan Alliance](#)

January 24, 2021, The Economic Times

India and Greece need to develop on their civilizational linkages and develop a partnership for the current times that could, among other issues, balance the Turkey-Pakistan alliance in the wider Eurasian region.

[Turkey Hits Twitter, Pinterest with Advertising Bans](#)

January 19, 2021, Voice of America

Turkey imposed advertising bans on Twitter, Periscope and Pinterest for not complying with a new law requiring social media companies to appoint a local representative to handle content removal orders.

UAE

[Israel Officially Opens Embassy in United Arab Emirates](#)

January 24, 2021, The Times of Israel

Israel officially opened its embassy to the United Arab Emirates, as Ambassador Eitan Na'eh arrived in Abu Dhabi. The development came on the same day that the UAE approved the opening of its embassy in Tel Aviv.

[Muraleedharan Meets UAE Minister of State, Discusses Strategic Partnership](#)

January 21, 2021, ANI

Minister of State for External Affairs, V. Muraleedharan met United Arab Emirates Minister of State Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh on Wednesday (Jan 20), as part of his three day official visit and discussed expanding the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries.

[Just Hours before Biden's Inauguration, the UAE and US Come to a Deal on F-35 Sales](#)

January 21, 2021, Defense News

The United Arab Emirates on Jan. 20 signed off on a deal to purchase up to 50 F-35 joint strike fighter aircraft and 18 MQ-9 Reaper drones from the United States. The agreement was one of the final acts of the Trump administration, occurring just an hour before President Joe Biden was inaugurated.

Yemen

[Yemen: Warring Groups Seethe at UN Envoy's 'Partisan' Role](#)

January 23, 2021, Anadolu Agency

As the world awaits steps by new US President Joe Biden to end the bloodshed in war-ravaged Yemen, UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths has come under fire from both rebel Houthis and President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi's government. Both parties accuse Griffiths, a former British diplomat, of taking sides, rather than meditating to bring peace to the country.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org