



# 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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## DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW Volume III, Issue 33

### 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

As the Islamist militant group Taliban swept through Afghanistan and entered capital Kabul, President Ashraf Ghani fled the country on August 15. Even as India and several other countries reaffirmed their commitment to not recognize government imposed through the use of force, China, Russia, Turkey, and Pakistan are reportedly preparing to accept Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. A number of countries in the region have already evacuated their diplomatic staff from Kabul including Saudi Arabia. However, Chinese and Russian embassies are reportedly planning to stay put in Afghanistan.

According to Russian media reports, Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen has assured Moscow that a "policy to ensure safe conditions for the functioning of the Russian and other embassies [is in place] and Taliban maintains good relations with Russia". Underscoring the importance of international mediators in Afghan peace process, Russian foreign minister stressed Moscow's intent to invite India and Iran for expanded Troika (Russia, China and US) meeting. Turkish President Erdogan reiterated Ankara's resolve to "intensify cooperation with Pakistan to stop a potential refugee influx from Afghanistan". Meanwhile, Washington is working on an agreement with Qatar to host around 8000 Afghan refugees who helped the US military during the 20 year 'war on terror' in Afghanistan.

Even as the Biden administration faces severe criticism for hasty unplanned withdrawal, Secretary of State Blinken stressed that Afghanistan exit is not hasty stressing "this is manifestly not Saigon" [Vietnam withdrawal].

In a major sign of India's deepening defence and security relationship with Saudi Arabia, New Delhi and Riyadh held their maiden naval exercise "Al-Mohed Al-Hindi" in Al-Jubail. Further, Israeli Defence Minister and Indian Ambassador to Israel held discussions about "deepening Israel-India defence and industrial ties". As a result, "Hyderabad-based Premier Explosives has emerged as the first private player in India to export rocket motors to Israel".

As regards trade and economy, India continued its agricultural exports to West Asia that included export of five varieties of apple from Himachal Pradesh to Bahrain. With a view to further boost Indian exports, New Delhi is likely to "fast track free trade agreements (FTAs) with at least six nations – including the UAE, UK, Australia, Canada, and the EU, over next few months". In another

development, India's Tata Group is eyeing cities in the Gulf, Egypt, and Turkey for expansion of iconic Taj hotels.

President Biden reportedly plans to overhaul 'US arms export policy' with increased emphasis on human rights. This is likely to impact countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It must be noted that, a section of President Biden's Democratic Party is opposed to the use of American weapons in Saudi-led war in Yemen.

On the US-Iran relations, Washington imposed sanctions on Omani national 'Mahmood Rashid Amur Al Habsi' accused of partnering with Iran's Quds Force to "facilitate shipments of Iranian oil to foreign customers, including buyers in East Asia". In another development, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) chief William Burns visited Israel. During their discussions, the delegation informed their Israeli counterparts that "they do not believe Iran will return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action". Israeli PM Bennett is looking for a joint US-Israel strategy on Iran if Vienna talks fail.

US cyber security firm 'fire eye' asserted that, China has carried out widespread cyber espionage campaign in Israel. "The attacks targeted Israeli government institutions, IT service providers and telecommunications firms in multiple, concurrent operations starting in January of 2019".

Amid rising inflation, Biden administration urged 'Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) to further increase crude production. OPEC's July agreement to boost oil production by 400,000 barrels/day on a monthly basis beginning August is "simply not enough" during the "critical moment in the global recovery", the White House added.

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

## Bahrain

### [India Exports Unique Varieties of Apples from Himachal Pradesh to Bahrain](#)

August 13, 2021, Mint

The first consignment comprised five varieties of apple—Royal Delicious, Dark Baron Gala, Scarlet Spur, Red Velox and Golden Delicious were exported from the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh to Bahrain.

### [Yair Lapid: Israel Will Soon Have Embassy in Morocco, Diplomatic Mission in Bahrain](#)

August 13, 2021, Israel Hayom

Israel will open a diplomatic mission in Bahrain within the next month, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid announced while on an official visit to Morocco to inaugurate a liaison office in Rabat.

## Egypt

### [India's Tata Group Eyes Cities in the Gulf, Egypt and Turkey for Taj Expansion: Sunil Sinha](#)

August 02, 2021, Zawya

The next two years will see five Taj hotels operating across the region, and the Tata Group has plans to expand its hospitality brand into more MENA cities.

### [Egypt, China Organize 35 Training Programs to Develop Capacity of Governmental Cadres in 8 Months](#)

August 12, 2021, Egypt Today

The Ministry of International Cooperation announced that 35 virtual training programs have been organized with the Chinese side, with the participation of 210 governmental cadres across sectors of transportation, maritime transport, health, education, space science, environment, industry, solidarity, agriculture, and electricity.

## Iraq

### [Iraq to Host Regional Leaders for Summit in Late August](#)

August 09, 2021, Daily Sabah

Iraq is expected to host a regional summit late this month, which Turkey's President Erdoğan and French President Macron will also attend, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's office said. Iraq is seeking to establish itself as a mediator between Arab countries and Iran, after reportedly hosting talks in April between rival regional powers Tehran and Riyadh.

### [Iraq PMF Leader Wants to Replicate Iranian Revolutionary Guards \(IRGC\) Model in Iraq](#)

August 09, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Leader of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in Iraq, Falih Al-Fayyadh, wants to replicate the Iranian Revolutionary Guards model in Iraq.

### [Iraq Receives 3rd Shipment of Donated Chinese COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

August 13, 2021, Israel Hayom

Iraq received the third batch of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Chinese government to help the country combat the pandemic.

### [Russia To Monitor Middle-East, Hold Drills With Tajikistan As US Withdraws From Afghanistan, Iraq](#)

July 27, 2021, The Eurasian Times

"Definitely this situation deserves special attention. The situation is slightly different in Iraq, since quite many of the so-called military advisers appealingly remain in Iraq and will continue their work there. So, we will certainly monitor it ... of course, we do not want one more territory to join the regional potential of instability," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.



## Iran

### [Russia Interested in Involving India, Iran to Bring Peace in Afghanistan: FM Lavrov](#)

August 14, 2021, Outlook India

Emphasising that international mediators can play a significant role in Afghanistan, Russia has said that it is interested in involving India and Iran to bring peace in the war-ravaged country. India, a major stakeholder in ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan, was not invited to the "extended Troika" meeting held in Qatar on August 11.

### [Afghanistan: Taliban Offensive Puts Iran in a Bind](#)

August 12, 2021, Deutsche Welle

Iran has been beefing up its military presence along its border with Afghanistan since early May when US-led foreign troops began their complete withdrawal from the war-torn nation and the Taliban started an aggressive offensive against Afghan government forces.

### [Iran to Temporarily Settle Afghans Fleeing Taliban at Border](#)

August 15, 2021, Bloomberg

Iran said it will provide temporary refuge to Afghans arriving at its borders as the Taliban advance on the capital, Kabul, prompting thousands of people to flee the city.

### [US Announces New Iran Sanctions, Targeting Omani 'Broker'](#)

August 13, 2021, AL Jazeera

The sanctions targeted Mahmood Rashid Amur Al Habsi, described by the US Department of the Treasury as a "foreign broker" and accused of partnering with senior Quds Force officials to "facilitate shipments of Iranian oil to foreign customers, including buyers in East Asia".

### [Hacker Group, Not Israel, Behind Cyberattack on Iran's Train System – Report](#)

August 15, 2021, The Times of Israel

A report, released by the Israeli- American cybersecurity company Check Point Software Technologies, named the Iranian opposition group Indra as the actor behind the attack, which it characterized as having inflicted "nation-state-level damage."

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## Israel

### [India, Israel Hold Fruitful Discussion' to Deepen Defence, Industrial Ties: Defence Minister Gantz](#)

August 09, 2021, News18

"This morning I met with Indian Ambassador to Israel, His Excellency Singla for a fruitful discussion about deepening Israel-India defence and industrial ties," the Israeli defence minister said in a tweet".

### [Premier Explosives Begins Shipping Rocket Motors to Israel](#)

August 14, 2021, The Times of India

In a major leg-up for aerospace and defence manufacturing in India, Hyderabad-based Premier Explosives Ltd said it has emerged as the first private player in India to export rocket motors to Israel.

### [CIA Chief's Visit to Israel: Not Only Israel Believes Iran Won't Return to Nuclear Deal](#)

August 12, 2021, Haaretz

Members of CIA Director Burns' delegation told their Israeli counterparts that they have little faith in the talks being pushed by P5+1 to bring Iran back into the 2015 deal, Israeli officials report.

### [Chinese Group Carried Out Widespread Cyber Espionage Campaign in Israel – Report](#)

August 10, 2021, The Times of Israel

United States cybersecurity firm 'FireEye' said a Chinese group has waged a widespread espionage campaign against Israeli entities. The attacks targeted Israeli government institutions, IT providers and telecommunications firms in multiple, concurrent operations starting in January of 2019.

### [Bennett Meets CIA Chief Burns to Discuss Iran, Increased Israel-US Cooperation](#)

August 11, 2021, The Times of Israel

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met with visiting CIA chief William Burns for talks on the situation in the Middle East and specifically Iran, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

[PM Bennett Seeking Joint US-Israel Strategy on Iran if Nuclear Talks Fail – Report](#)

August 13, 2021, The Times of Israel

During his meeting this week with CIA chief William Burns, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett told the US spymaster that Jerusalem and Washington should form a joint strategy for a scenario in which Iran refuses to re-enter the 2015 nuclear deal.

[Israeli President's Brother Michael Herzog is PM Bennett's Pick for US Ambassador](#)

August 05, 2021, The Times of Israel

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has chosen retired Brig. Gen. Michael Herzog, President Isaac Herzog's brother, to serve as Israeli ambassador to the United States.

[Israel Receives 3rd Warship from Germany](#)

August 11, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The Israeli army received the third Sa'ar 6-class warship from Germany. This handover came amidst escalating tensions in the Gulf that could see a confrontation with Iran.

[Israel PM Reduces New Settlement Units Fearing US](#)

August 13, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has reduced the number of settlement units in the occupied Palestinian territories that his government intends to approve next week by more than 1,000 for fear of backlash from America.

## Jordan

### [Ties Between Peace Partners Jordan, Israel Seen as Improving](#)

July 26, 2021, Voice of America

After years of strained relations between Jordan and Israel over the Palestinian issue, analysts say a new dynamic dominates their relationship with the end of Benjamin Netanyahu's premiership and they point to some positive momentum.

## Kuwait

### [Kuwaiti Amir Congratulates India on Independence Day](#)

August 15, 2021, Arab Times

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al- Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable of congratulations to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind on his nation's Independence Day Anniversary. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al- Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of identical content to the Indian president.

## Lebanon

### [Fuel Tanker Explodes in Lebanon, Killing at least 28](#)

August 15, 2021, AL Jazeera

At least 28 people were killed and 79 injured when a fuel tank exploded in Akkar in northern Lebanon, the health ministry said.

### [Lebanon's Foreign Reserves Reach 'Red Line': Central Bank Chief](#)

August 14, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Lebanon's foreign reserves have reached a "red line", the country's central bank governor warned. Earlier Lebanon's central bank had halted fuel subsidies that have drained the country's foreign reserves.

### [Israel Announces New Special Unit to Confront Lebanon's Hezbollah in Ground Warfare: Report](#)

July 27, 2021, The New Arab

The Israeli army has formed a new combat unit which will be used in any future war with Lebanese Shia paramilitary Hezbollah. The unit, which bears the number 888 and is named 'Ghosts', combines advanced and diversified intelligence and aerial fire capabilities.

## Oman

### [Shortage of Indian Wheat Flour Hits Oman](#)

August 11, 2021, Gulf News

Oman shelves have run out of Indian brands of wheat flour for almost four weeks in a row and there's no word on when the stores will be replenished.

### [Oman Sets up Hydrogen Alliance to Develop Clean Fuel Industry](#)

August 12, 2021, Reuters

Oman has established a national hydrogen alliance to develop an industry for the production, transport and use of the fuel that Gulf states have been increasingly looking to as a business to meet the worldwide demand for clean fuels.

## Qatar

### [India, Several Other Nations Reaffirm Not to Recognise Govt Imposed Through Use of Force in Afghanistan](#)

August 13, 2021, Outlook India

India, Germany, Qatar, Turkey and several other nations have reaffirmed to not recognise any government in Afghanistan that is imposed through the use of military force and called for an immediate end to violence and attacks in the war-torn country.

### [US Nearing Deal with Qatar to House Thousands of Afghans Who Helped Military, as Situation Worsens in Afghanistan](#)

August 14, 2021, CNN

The Biden administration is working to finalize an agreement with Qatar to temporarily house thousands of Afghans who worked with the United States and their families and are fleeing their country as the security situation deteriorates, according to a source familiar with the ongoing discussions. The source said it could be as many as 8,000 Afghans but cautioned the deal is not final.

### [China, Russia Embassies Stay Put in Afghanistan as US and Allies Flee Taliban](#)

August 16, 2021, South China Morning Post

The Chinese embassy in Kabul signalled that it had been in contact with the Taliban and would be staying put as the insurgent forces neared a complete takeover of the country. The Chinese embassy has requested various factions in Afghanistan to ensure the safety of Chinese nations, Chinese institutions and Chinese interests.

### [India is a Key Food Source for Qatar, says LuLu Executive](#)

August 15, 2021, Gulf Times

"India is a very important source of food for Qatar. India is one of the largest producers of food items like lentil and sugar, among others. It plays a key role in ensuring food security," said Dr Mohamed Althaf, director of LuLu Group International, on the sidelines of the event 'India Ustav 202'.



## Saudi Arabia

### [The White House Calls on OPEC to Boost Oil Production As Gasoline Prices Rise](#)

August 11, 2021, CNBC

The White House is calling on OPEC and its oil-producing allies to boost production in an effort to combat climbing gasoline prices, amid concerns that rising inflation could derail the economic recovery from Covid.

### [India, Saudi Arabia Begin Maiden Bilateral Naval Exercise in Port Al-Jubail](#)

August 12, 2021, India Today

The maiden bilateral naval exercise between India and Saudi Arabia, dubbed "Al-Mohed Al-Hindi," began in Al-Jubail, Saudi Arabia. The exercise comprises several shore and sea-based drills between the navies of the two countries.

### [India-Saudi Relations Are Built on The Strong Edifice of History: Indian Ambassador to Riyadh](#)

August 14, 2021, Zawya

This year as we commence celebrating 75 years of our independence, we also commemorate 75 years of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between India and Saudi Arabia. Our relations are built on the long history of the movement of people between India and the Kingdom for mercantile trade and the Hajj pilgrimage.

### [World Reacts as Taliban Sweeps Through Afghanistan](#)

August 15, 2021, Arab News

The world is reacting to the rapid developments in Afghanistan after Taliban insurgents entered Kabul and President Ashraf Ghani left Afghanistan on Sunday (August 15), bringing the Islamist militants close to taking over the country.

### [Saudi Embassy Evacuated its Staff from Afghanistan](#)

August 16, 2021, The Washington Post

Saudi Arabia said all staff was evacuated from the embassy in Kabul due to the changing conditions on the ground, joining other countries that have also shuttered their embassies as the Taliban advanced on the Afghan capital.

[Taliban Will Declare the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Resounding Defeat of The US-backed Government](#)

August 16, 2021, Business Insider

The Taliban will declare the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from the presidential palace in Kabul, a Taliban official announced. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban ruled the country under the same name. Only a handful of countries recognized the regime, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkmenistan.

[Qatar Appoints First Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Since Rift](#)

August 11, 2021, AL Jazeera

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is further strengthening diplomatic ties to Saudi Arabia, reinstating an ambassador after a four-year-long regional dispute.

## Syria

### [Explosion Reported at Syria's Latakia Port on Ship That May Be Iranian](#)

August 10, 2021, The Times of Israel

A major explosion occurred on a commercial ship docked at Syria's Latakia port on Tuesday (August 10) afternoon, according to Arabic-language media and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

### [U.S. Troops in Syria Are Protecting Turkey from Terrorism – Analyst](#)

August 14, 2021, Ahval

U.S. troops in Syria are protecting Turkey from terrorism, according to Chris Kilford, a former Canadian air force officer and defence attaché to Turkey and Azerbaijan.

### [Afghanistan's Collapse Leaves Allies Questioning U.S. Resolve on Other Fronts](#)

August 15, 2021, The Washington Post

The Taliban's stunningly swift advances across Afghanistan have sparked global alarm, reviving doubts about the credibility of U.S. foreign policy promises and drawing harsh criticisms even from some of the United States' closest allies.

## Turkey

### [China, Russia, Turkey and Pakistan Prepare to Accept Taliban Rule in Afghanistan](#)

August 15, 2021, Daily Mail

China, Russia, Pakistan and Turkey all appear set to formally recognise Taliban rule in neighbouring Afghanistan after the Islamist terror group seized the Presidential Palace in Kabul and the country's embattled president fled for Tajikistan.

### [Turkey to Exert Every Effort for Afghanistan's Stability: Erdoğan](#)

August 15, 2021, Daily News

Turkey will make every effort to ensure the stability of Afghanistan and the region, President Erdoğan has said, vowing to intensify cooperation with Pakistan to stop a potential refugee influx from the country.

### [Taliban Leadership Can Meet with Erdogan 'in the right circumstances'](#)

August 13, 2021, Middle East Monitor

"Everyone wants to meet our leader," Taliban spokesman Mohammed Naeem said. "And we would also like that, but in the right circumstances. There is communication between us and the Turkish Embassy in Doha. And we like to have relations with all countries."

## UAE

### [India-UAE is a Partnership for All Seasons](#)

August 15, 2021, The National

The deep-rooted relationship has received new momentum under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

### [India Will Fast Track Trade Deals With Six Nations: Commerce Secretary](#)

August 11, 2021, Business Standard

India will fast-track free trade agreements (FTAs) with at least six nations – including the UAE, the UK, Australia, Canada, and the EU over the next few months, in line with its revamped foreign trade strategy, Commerce and Industry Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam said. The earliest one may be inked with the UAE.

### [President Biden Plans Shift in US Arms Policy to Add Weight to Human Rights Concerns](#)

August 05, 2021, Reuters

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration is preparing an overhaul of arms export policy to increase the emphasis on human rights, a departure from former President Donald Trump's prioritization of economic benefits to U.S. defense contractors.

### [Detainee Says China Has Secret Jail in Dubai, Holds Uyghurs](#)

August 16, 2021, The Associated Press

A young Chinese woman says she was held for eight days at a Chinese-run secret detention facility in Dubai along with at least two Uyghurs, in what may be the first evidence that China is operating a so-called "black site" beyond its borders.

### [Afghanistan Defence Minister Bismillah Khan Mohammadi Fled to UAE: Kabul Airport Sources](#)

August 15, 2021, ABP News

According to the information given by sources at Kabul Airport, the Defence Minister of Afghanistan, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, has fled the country. As per the inputs, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi has fled to UAE. President Ashraf Ghani was also reported to have left the country for Tajikistan.

## Yemen

### [US Announces \\$165M in Humanitarian Aid to Yemen](#)

August 09, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United States will provide \$165m in additional humanitarian aid to Yemen, the US's special envoy to the war-torn country has announced, amid rising concerns about the humanitarian toll of the conflict.



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