



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

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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.

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Abstract

Continuing the deepening India-United Arab Emirates (UAE) economic partnership, Indian Minister for Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal met UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi in New Delhi to "formally launch negotiations on the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)". The two sides aim to conclude 'CEPA' negotiations by December 2021 and sign a formal agreement in March 2022". It is expected that CEPA will "increase bilateral trade in goods to USD 100 billion and in services to USD 15 billion" within five years. In another development, India has emerged as Dubai's second biggest trade partner in the first half of 2021.

Saudi Arabia celebrated its 91st National Day on September 23. Riyadh's Ambassador in New Delhi shed light on Saudi Arabia's 'Vision 2030' creating business opportunities for Kingdom's strategic partners including India in areas such as "management, consultancy services, construction projects, telecommunications, information technology, software development, pharmaceuticals and more". Saudi Arabia "issued 44 new licenses for Indian investments" in 2020; while, it "invested USD 2.81 billion in areas of renewable energy, petrochemicals, agriculture, health, and technology" in India.

At the 76th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), Turkish President Erdogan reiterated Ankara's stance in "favour of resolving the Kashmir issue through dialogue between the parties and within the framework of relevant UN resolutions". In an apparent rebuke to President Erdogan's assertions, Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar emphasised the importance of "adhering to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions in respect of Cyprus in a meeting with his Cypriot counterpart".

On the sidelines of UNGA, Foreign Ministers of Iran and India held discussions on the necessity of an inclusive government in Taliban led Afghanistan; without naming Pakistan, New Delhi and Tehran chided foreign interference in Afghanistan. In a move aimed at getting international recognition, the Taliban is eyeing right to represent Afghanistan at the UN and has written a letter to the UNGA seeking to address world leaders in the on-going session. In line with this, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani urged the international community [UNGA] "not to boycott the Taliban" and stressed on the "necessity of continuing dialogue, as boycott only leads to polarisation... whereas dialogue could bring in positive results", he added.

Continuing India's growing defence outreach in West Asia, Indian Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh arrived in Oman for a three-day visit beginning September 27. The visit aims to "consolidate bilateral defence relations with Oman and explore new avenues for defence cooperation".

On the US-Iran relations, President Biden reiterated Washington's willingness to return to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) only if Iran does the same. US and the European Union (EU) have voiced their frustration over the new Iranian government showing no indication of returning to Vienna talks. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's King Salman voiced Riyadh's support to efforts preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. On his part, Iranian President Raisi "called for an end to US sanctions against his country, describing them as method of waging war". Importantly, President Raisi declared that "nukes have no place in our [Iranian] defence doctrine and deterrence policy". Amidst this, Iran denied International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors access to 'Karaj' centrifuge assembly site, a move violating September 12 agreement to allow inspectors to service the surveillance equipment.

In a resounding statement of support for Israel, US House of Representatives passed a bill to provide USD 1 billion to replenish Israel's 'Iron Dome Missile Defence System' with 420 votes in favour and 9 opposed. A small section of the Democratic Party opposed this bill. Israeli Prime Minister Bennett described passing of the bill as an "important moment of truth, where the representatives of the American People overwhelmingly supported Israel", he added.

Continuing efforts to expand the 'Abraham Accords' and normalisation of relations with Israel, New York-based Center for Peace Communications (CPC) had organized a conference in Iraq's Kurdistan region attended by 300 leaders. In sharp opposition of this, Baghdad issued arrest warrants against those who attended the conference.

In a sign of Moscow's deepening defence relationship with the Gulf countries, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held discussions with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The two sides discussed "topical Middle Eastern issues" and "Russia's updated concept of collective security in the Persian Gulf zone". On the arms procurement, despite US sanctions, Turkey could buy more Russian S-400 missile defence systems.

In another development, reportedly Russia has asked Israel to push US on holding trilateral talks on the on-going conflict in Syria. Jordanian Foreign Minister has

also urged "US and Russia to hold dialogue as that is the only way through which the Syrian issue can be resolved". Meanwhile, UN Human Rights Office revealed that "at least 350,209 people have been killed in Syria's 10-year war".

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

Bahrain

[Evergrande Not Enough to Deter Investcorp from China Expansion](#)

September 26, 2021, Bloomberg

Bahrain's Investcorp expects the crisis enveloping China Evergrande Group to offer fresh opportunities for the Middle East's biggest private equity and alternative asset manager as it seeks to expand in Asia.

[US Senators Urge State Dept To Confront Bahrain's 'Repression'](#)

September 24, 2021, AL Jazeera

A bipartisan group of United States senators has called on Secretary of State Antony Blinken to press Bahrain to end what it calls the "violent, systemic repression" of its population.

[Bahrain, US Navy Task Force To Cooperate For Protection of Persian Gulf](#)

September 26, 2021, Israel Defence

Task Force 59, which has been commissioned by the U.S. Navy, and is the first of its kind, will be responsible for huge areas in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The leaders of Bahrain have made a commitment to cooperate with a new task force of the U.S. Navy that will integrate unmanned aircraft into maritime operations.

Egypt

[High-Speed Rail to Connect Red Sea and the Mediterranean](#)

September 13, 2021, Spiegel International

A consortium led by Germany's Siemens has been awarded a contract to build a high-speed rail network in Egypt. The deal is good for Egypt, Germany and Europe – and it shows that the West can still compete against China.

[Egypt, US Aim to Remove Obstacles Hindering Relations](#)

September 24, 2021, Asharq AL-Awsat

Egypt and the United States are working on removing any obstacles that may hinder the two countries' aspirations to push their strong relations toward new horizons as they prepare for the next round of strategic dialogue.

[UN Secretary-General Appeals for Countries To Sign CTBT](#)

September 23, 2021, UN News

UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged eight key countries including Egypt, which has not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to do so without delay.

Iraq

[Iraqi President Barham Salih Tells UNGA: 'Corruption and Terrorism Work in Tandem'](#)

September 24, 2021, Arab News

Cooperation and solidarity is the worlds "only choice" in the fight against global terrorism, Iraqi President Barham Salih said.

[Iraq Issues Arrest Warrants Against Attendees of Israel Normalization Conference](#)

September 26, 2021, Arab News

Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council issued warrants for the arrest of people who attended a conference that called for the normalization of ties with Israel in autonomous Kurdistan.

[Iran's Intelligence Minister Warns US and Israeli Bases in Iraqi Kurdistan](#)

September 25, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The Iranian Minister of Intelligence, Esmail Khatib, warned the US and Israeli bases in the Kurdistan region of Iraq against attempting to disrupt Iranian security because they "will face an aggressive and effective response."

[OPEC Nations Warn of Oil Market Turbulence from Gas Crisis](#)

September 23, 2021, Business Standard

As the global natural gas crunch hits suppliers and consumers alike, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) nations are warning of the knock-on impact for oil markets.

[5 Killed in Daesh Attack in Iraq's Diyala](#)

September 26, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Five people were killed in a twin attack by suspected Daesh militants in Iraq's eastern Diyala province, according to a local police officer.

Iran

[India, Iran Send a Common Afghanistan Message: Chide Foreign Interference; Bat For Inclusive Govt](#)

September 23, 2021, The Economic Times

India and Iran have discussed the necessity for an all-encompassing government in Kabul that includes representatives of all Afghan tribes and ethnic groups, and without naming Pakistan, chided foreign interference in Afghanistan when EAM S. Jaishankar met his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian in New York.

[President Biden to UNGA: 'We Are Prepared To Return To Full Compliance' With The JCPOA if Iran Does The Same](#)

September 21, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

"We are working with the P5+1 to engage Iran diplomatically, to seek a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We are prepared to return to full compliance if Iran does the same," President Biden told UNGA.

[Iran Appeals to Chinese Companies for Billions In Oil Investments](#)

September 24, 2021, Iran International

Iran's oil minister has said that his country intends to raise \$145 billion in domestic and foreign investments to improve its oil industry in the next 4-8 years, underlining the importance of cooperation with Chinese companies.

[Iran Denies Access To Site It Says Was Sabotaged by Israel](#)

September 26, 2021, The Times of Israel

Iran denied access to UN inspectors who were seeking to visit the Karaj centrifuge assembly site, several months after a sabotage incident at the facility, which Tehran blamed on Israel.

[At UN, West Frustrated by Slow Pace of JCPOA Negotiations with Iran](#)

September 24, 2021, Asharq AL-Awsat

The United States and European Union (EU) voiced frustration at the UN this week over the slow pace with Iran, saying its new government showed no indication it was ready to revive the nuclear accord.

[Sanctions Are 'US Way of War', Iranian President at UN](#)

September 21, 2021, UN News

President Raisi described the presence of the United States in the Middle East as a "lack of rationality", which has been detrimental to "oppressed people, from Palestine and Syria to Yemen and Afghanistan, as well as the US taxpayers".

[High Time for U.S. To Wake Up To New Reality: Iranian Foreign Ministry](#)

September 25, 2021, Tehran Times

The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry has once again reiterated Tehran's resolve to engage in only results-oriented talks to revive a nuclear deal it struck with world powers in 2015, saying it is high time for the United States, which unilaterally quit the agreement, "to wake up to new reality."

[Iran Approaching Israel in Golan Heights, Official Says](#)

September 23, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Iranian fighters are a few kilometres away from Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said.

Israel

[Anti-Israel Group in House Failed in Iron Dome Vote - PM Bennett](#)

September 26, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Israeli PM Bennett called the vote in the US House of Representatives to provide \$1bn. to replenish batteries for the Iron Dome missile defense system, with 420 in favour and nine opposed, an "important moment."

[U.S. and Israel Held Secret Talks on Iran "Plan B"](#)

September 22, 2021, Axios

The U.S. and Israel held secret talks on Iran last week to discuss a possible "plan B" if nuclear talks are not resumed.

[Iran's FM Apparently Walks Back Comment That Nuke Talks Will Restart Very Soon](#)

September 22, 2021, The Times of Israel

Iran's foreign minister seemed to backtrack from comments he made a day earlier when he stated that stalled talks on the Iranian nuclear accord would resume "very soon," now saying instead that the West and Tehran have a different concept of the timeframe.

[At UN, President Biden Promises 'Relentless Diplomacy,' Defense of Democracy](#)

September 21, 2021, Middle East Monitor

US President Joe Biden mapped out a new era of vigorous competition without a new Cold War despite China's ascendance during his first United Nations address, promising military restraint and a robust fight against climate change.

[President Abbas Gives Israel 'One Year' To Leave Palestinian Territory](#)

September 25, 2021, AL Jazeera

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has given Israel one year to withdraw from occupied territory and threatened to withdraw recognition of Israel if it failed to do so.

Jordan

[Jordan, Saudi Monarchs Back Palestinian State With East Jerusalem as Capital](#)

September 23, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Jordan's King Abdullah and Saudi Arabia's King Salman gave their backing for a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital in pre-recorded speeches at the UN General Assembly, saying that it was essential for global stability.

[Syrian Military Chief Makes Rare Visit To Jordan To Discuss Border Security](#)

September 20, 2021, Reuters

Syria's defence minister visited Jordan to discuss stability on their mutual border, the first such meeting since the Syrian conflict erupted a decade ago when the two neighbours supported opposing factions, officials said.

[Jordan's FM Says Syrian Crisis Can Only Be Resolved with US-Russian Dialogue](#)

September 24, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Jordan's foreign minister has said that the Syrian crisis can only be resolved through exclusively US-Russian dialogue, alongside a collective Arab role.

Kuwait

[IAEA General Conference Elects Sadiq M. Marafi of Kuwait as Conference President](#)

September 20, 2021, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA's General Conference in Vienna elected Kuwait's Ambassador, H.E. Sadiq M. Marafi, as President of the 65th regular session of the Conference.

[Chinese Bank Plans To Finance Kuwait's Shaqaya Economic City Project](#)

September 20, 2021, Zawya

According to informed sources, officials of the China Development Bank, which is in charge of preparing the technical study for the project to establish the economic city of Shaqaya, have hinted at the possibility of lending Kuwait KD 5 billion.

Lebanon

[Lebanon's New PM Vows to Take Back Land It Sees as Occupied by Israel](#)

September 20, 2021, The Times of Israel

Lebanon's new Prime Minister Najib Mikati vowed to reclaim territories it sees as occupied by Israel, while warning that the country has the right to respond to any aggression.

Oman

[Indian Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh Arrives in Oman on Three-Day Visit](#)

September 26, 2021, The New Indian Express

Indian Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh arrived in Oman for a three-day visit aimed at further expansion of bilateral military ties with the Gulf nation.

[Pakistan Seeks Trade Deals with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman - Official Says](#)

September 26, 2021, Reuters

Pakistan will pursue individual trade deals with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, a Pakistani official said, as talks with the Gulf Cooperation Council remain stalled.

Qatar

[Qatar's Ruler Urges World Leaders Not to Boycott Taliban](#)

September 21, 2021, Outlook India

The ruling emir of Qatar, whose nation has played a pivotal role in Afghanistan in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal, urged world leaders gathered at the United Nations against turning their backs on the country's Taliban rulers.

[Taliban Eye Seat at UN as Pakistan, Qatar Favour Mainstreaming Terror Group](#)

September 22, 2021, India Today

Taliban has claimed the right to represent Afghanistan at the UN. They have written a letter to the UN seeking to address world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly this week in New York City.

[Russia in Sync with US, China, Pakistan on Taliban Issue; Working to Ensure Promises Are Kept](#)

September 26, 2021, Hindustan Times

Russia, China, Pakistan, and the United States are working together to ensure that Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers keep their promises, especially to form a genuinely representative government and prevent extremism from spreading.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi King Tells the UN Kingdom Supports Efforts to Prevent Nuclear Iran](#)

September 22, 2021, Reuters

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz told the United Nations General Assembly that his kingdom supports efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, as world leaders prepare to resume talks with Tehran to reinstate a 2015 nuclear pact.

[Russian FM Lavrov, Gulf Cooperation Council Delegation Discuss Regional Security](#)

September 25, 2021, TASS

Moscow and the GCC "held a profound exchange of opinions on topical Middle Eastern issues, and on Russia's updated concept of collective security in the Persian Gulf zone," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

[US: Our Partnership with Saudi Arabia Underpinned The Region's Security](#)

September 23, 2021, Middle East Monitor

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that his country's partnership with Saudi Arabia "underpinned the region's security," a statement issued said. The statement was issued to mark the National Day of the Saudi Kingdom.

[In Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Goals, a Chance to Deepen Partnerships, Including with India](#)

September 22, 2021, The Indian Express

In the five years since the ambitious plan was launched, the Kingdom has created immense opportunities and an attractive business environment for its strategic partners.

[Indian Petroleum Minister Call's Saudi Arabia for Second Time in Two Months](#)

September 18, 2021, The Economic Times

Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri called Saudi Arabian Oil Minister - the second such exchange in as many months - to discuss energy partnership.

[Saudi Retains Top Spot in Oil Supplies to China with Volumes Up 53 Percent y/y](#)
September 20, 2021, Reuters

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, kept its ranking as China's top crude supplier for a ninth straight month in August as major producers relaxed production cuts.

Syria

[Russia Said Asking Israel to Push US on Holding Trilateral Syria Talks](#)

September 26, 2021, The Times of Israel

Russia has asked Israel to push the United States to agree to hold trilateral talks on the ongoing conflict in Syria.

[At least 350,000 People Killed in Syrian Civil War](#)

September 24, 2021, AL Jazeera

At least 350,209 people have been killed in Syria's 10-year war, the United Nations human rights office has said, calling the tally an "undercount" as it released its first report since 2014 on the conflict's death toll.

[Turkey President: US is Sending Weapons to Terrorist Groups in Syria](#)

September 24, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the United States has begun transferring weapons and ammunition to terrorist organisations in Syria, stressing that his country will not stand idle as this takes place.

Turkey

[Hours After President Erdogan Rakes Up Kashmir at UNGA, India Calls For Respecting UNSC Resolutions On Cyprus](#)

September 22, 2021, WION

Hours after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a close ally of Pakistan, raked up the Kashmir issue in his address at the UN General Assembly, India called for respecting UN Security Council resolutions on Cyprus.

[President Erdogan: Turkey Could Buy More Russian S-400s Despite US Warnings](#)

September 26, 2021, AL Jazeera

Turkey's leader says his country is considering buying a second Russian missile system despite strong objections by NATO ally the United States.

[Turkey Says No Afghan Airport Deal Without 'Inclusive' Taliban Government](#)

September 26, 2021, News18

Turkey expects the Taliban government in Afghanistan to be "inclusive" before any agreement can be made about operating Kabul's strategic airport, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was quoted as saying.

[Businesses Optimistic on Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad Freight Line Reopening](#)

September 26, 2021, Middle East Monitor

A critical railway in Turkey's region, the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) freight train, expected to relaunch in 2021, has created a positive atmosphere for those in the business world.

UAE

[India, UAE to Sign Trade Agreement by March 2022](#)

September 23, 2021, Business Standard

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have formally launched negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that aims at expanding bilateral trade and investment between the two nations.

[India Emerges as Dubai's Second Biggest Trade Partner After China](#)

September 27, 2021, Business Standard

According to a Dubai government statement, the emirate had a trade volume of 86.7 billion dirham with China in H1 (first half) of 2021, followed by India and the US in third position.

[UAE, China Foreign Ministers Discuss Strategic Relations, Common Concerns](#)

September 23, 2021, Khaleej Times

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; and Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, discussed the friendship and comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries and means to further develop them and boost cooperation in various fields.

[UAE Pledges To Expand Investment in Britain](#)

September 16, 2021, Financial Times

The United Arab Emirates has pledged to invest £10bn in UK clean energy, technology and infrastructure as the oil-rich Gulf state expands a multibillion-pound partnership with the British government.

Yemen

[China, Yemen Vow to Jointly Promote Bilateral Ties](#)

September 26, 2021, CGTN

China is willing to work with Yemen to strengthen bilateral relations, and supports the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Yemen and the legitimate government of Yemen, said State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

[Over 140 Killed in Clashes for Yemen's Marib – Military Sources](#)

September 25, 2021, Jordan Times

More than 140 rebels and pro-government troops have been killed this week as fighting intensifies for Yemen's strategic northern city of Marib, military and medical sources said.



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