

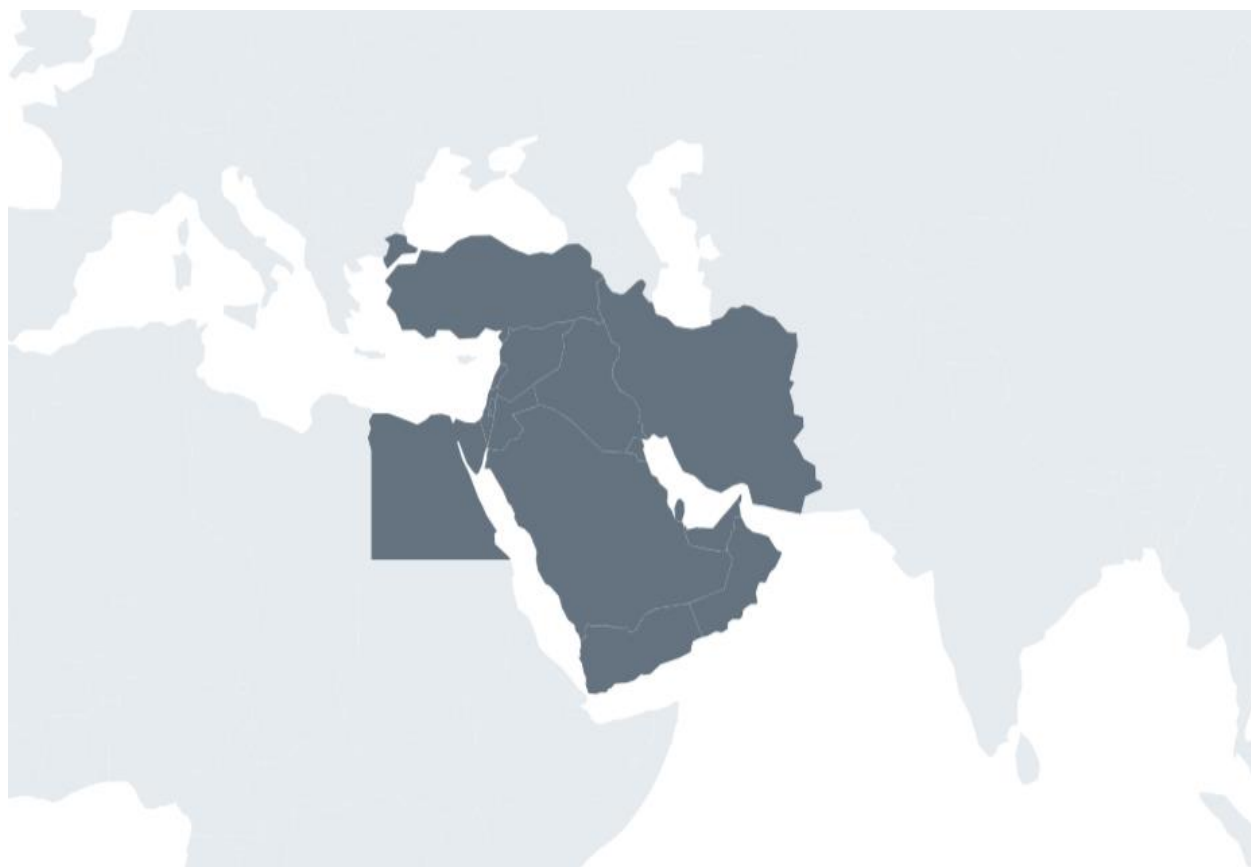


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume III, Issue 49 | December 6, 2021

Delhi Policy Group

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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.

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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

Boosting India's ability to keep an eye on China, Indian Army has deployed four Israeli-made Heron drones along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh sector. Reportedly, the "anti-jamming capability of the new advanced drones is much better than the previous versions". India is also likely to purchase General Atomics Predator drones from the US. In another development, Israeli Ambassador in New Delhi revealed that leaders of the West Asian Quad "India, US, Israel, and UAE will soon meet in Dubai to discuss infrastructure cooperation".

Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, met Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed. He "conveyed greetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Golden Jubilee of UAE" while expressing confidence that "India-UAE partnership will scale new heights in the years to come". Speaking at a conclave in Delhi, Dr. Jaishankar highlighted the success (impressive outcomes) of India's diplomacy in West Asia, where New Delhi has assiduously "courted several key players including the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Israel". India's emphasis has been on "diversifying relations with the Gulf countries from energy to new areas of cooperation".

In his address at the 5th Indian Ocean Conference held in Abu Dhabi, Dr. Jaishankar spoke about "US moving towards greater realism about itself and the world, which will have implications for the Indian Ocean". Simultaneously, he shed light on "rise of China and its centrality to global economy". As regards trade, India and UAE are likely to conclude negotiations for a free trade agreement next week, when two sides meet for third round of talks in New Delhi.

The seventh round of Vienna talks on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to curb Iran's nuclear program have been adjourned as the Europeans expressed disappointment and concern over Tehran's unreasonable demands. E3 diplomats reportedly claimed that "the new Iranian government has backtracked on compromises tentatively reached with the previous government (Rouhani) in two main areas including, US sanctions on Iran and Iran's Uranium-enrichment activities". On its part, the Biden administration is still seeking a mutual compliance with the JCPOA but is "preparing for a world in which there is no return" to the agreement. Amidst this, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) revealed that "Iran has started enriching Uranium to 20 percent purity at Fordow plant".

Israeli Prime Minister Bennett continued to warn P5+1 that they must pressurise Iran to halt Uranium enrichment prior to resumption of next round of talks in Vienna. Director-General of the Mossad, David Barnea, will travel to Washington to convince the Biden administration that they must not seek an interim agreement with Iran in which Tehran does not return to full compliance with the JCPOA. Importantly, Israel's defence procurement committee has approved a deal for the purchase of Lockheed Martin's CH-53k helicopters at a cost of USD 2.4 billion. Amidst reports about Tel Aviv planning a possible military strike, Iran's air-defence system fired missiles in sky above Natanz, where a nuclear site is located.

French President Emmanuel Macron believes regional powers (Gulf states and Israel) should be involved in JCPOA negotiations. He stressed that "it will be difficult to reach an agreement if the Gulf states, Israel, and all those whose security is directly affected are not involved [in the ongoing negotiations]". In another development, France and the United Arab Emirates signed USD 19 billion arms deal that will see Abu Dhabi acquire 80 Dassault Rafale fighter aircrafts and 12 military helicopters.

With regards to developments in Afghanistan, as UAE and Saudi Arabia expand their diplomatic presence in the war-torn country, it is believed that they are "trying to match Qatar's sway in Kabul".

On the energy front, OPEC+ has stuck with its earlier plan of hiking crude production by 400,000 barrels per day in January 2022. Meanwhile, JP Morgan forecasts oil prices overshooting USD 125/barrel in 2022 and USD 150/barrel in 2023.

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain Central Bank Plans To Offer Digital Dinar](#)

December 05, 2021, Reuters

The Central Bank of Bahrain plans to offer digital Dinar through a digital payments platform which will be available around the clock.

Egypt

[Egypt Looks To Grow Its Arsenal While Moving Away From US Suppliers](#)

December 03, 2021, Israel Hayom

US President Joe Biden's administration, like its predecessors, has raised human rights questions before releasing military aid and hardware to the country. President El-Sissi, a former general, has begun to look elsewhere for firepower to maintain the Egyptian military's reputation as one of the region's largest standing forces.

[Egypt, China Agree To Establish Joint Lab For Smart Agriculture](#)

December 03, 2021, CGTN

Egyptian and Chinese scientific research institutions have signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint laboratory for smart agriculture, the Chinese Embassy in Egypt said in a statement.

[IIT Delhi Seeks Centre's Nod to Open Campuses in Egypt, Saudi Arabia](#)

November 15, 2021, Moneycontrol

The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi) has sought approval from the government to open two overseas campuses – one in Egypt and another in Saudi Arabia.

Iraq

[IS Attack on Iraq Village Kills 13](#)

December 03, 2021, The Tribune

An attack by Islamic State (IS) militants on a village in northern Iraq on Friday (December 03) killed three villagers and 10 Kurdish soldiers, officials in Iraq's Kurdish region said.

Iran

[Vienna Talks on Reviving Iran Nuclear Deal Adjourn Amid Disappointment Over Lack of Progress](#)

December 04, 2021, The Washington Post

Week-long talks between world powers and Iran trying to revive their 2015 nuclear agreement adjourned in Vienna after European negotiators expressed disappointment and concern over what they said was a lack of progress and unreasonable Iranian demands.

[Biden Administration Still Seeking Return To Compliance With Original Iran Nuclear Deal While Preparing For World Without It](#)

December 04, 2021, CNN

The Biden administration is still seeking a return to mutual compliance to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran but is "preparing for a world in which there is no return" to the landmark agreement, a senior State Department official said.

[Iran, P4+1 Negotiators Wrap Up Vienna Talks](#)

December 04, 2021, Tehran Times

Iran lamented a lack of seriousness on the European side during the current round of talks in Vienna as Iranian negotiators presented two draft proposals regarding sanctions and nuclear-related steps to be taken if talks were to lead to an agreement.

[Secretary of State Blinken Says Russia and US Have 'Shared Interest' in Preventing a Nuclear Iran](#)

December 02, 2021, Middle East Eye

The top US diplomat told his Russian counterpart that the two countries have a common interest in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

[Iran Enriching Uranium at 20 Percent Purity at Fordow: IAEA](#)

December 02, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Iran has started to enrich uranium up to 20 per cent purity at Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said.

[Iran's Air-Defense Units Fire Missiles To Test Rapid Reaction Force Over Central Natanz City](#)

December 04, 2021, Press TV (Iran)

Natanz air-defence commander confirmed the report about the test-fire of the missiles in the sky above Natanz, where a nuclear site is located, but emphasized that there is nothing to worry about.

[Iranian Border Guards, Taliban Engage in Fierce Fighting](#)

December 01, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Heavy fighting took place between Iran's border guards and the Taliban along the border, in north-eastern Iran, with reports of casualties on both sides.

Israel

[Indian Army Gets 4 Israeli Heron Drones To Keep An Eye On China Along LAC In Ladakh](#)

November 30, 2021, India Today

In a major boost to its capabilities, the Indian Army has deployed 4 Heron drones from Israel to keep a close eye on China's movements in the Ladakh sector.

[Iran Must Halt Uranium Enrichment Before Nuclear Talks Resume - Israeli PM Bennett](#)

December 05, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

World powers must pressure Tehran to halt its enrichment of uranium prior to the resumption of another round of indirect talks in Vienna to revive the 2015 Iran deal, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said.

[Mossad Chief Heads To US as Iran Nuclear Talks Stall](#)

December 05, 2021, The Times of Israel

Director of the Mossad, David Barnea, will seek to convince the US leadership not to seek an interim deal that would not see Iran return to full compliance with the agreement, and instead seek to enlist international support for tough sanctions on Tehran.

[Israel's Mossad Pledge To Do 'Whatever It Takes' To Stop Iran Develop Nuclear Weapons](#)

December 03, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel's Mossad has sent a chilling message to Iran with a warning that the Islamic Republic "will never have nuclear weapons." Though not part of the nuclear deal, which is currently being renegotiated by Iran and the US, Israel has gone to great lengths to undermine efforts by the major powers to reach an agreement.

[Amid Iran tensions, Defence Minister Gantz To Head to Washington to Meet with US Defence Secretary Austin](#)

December 02, 2021, The Times of Israel

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz will travel to Washington next week for a series of meetings with top American officials amid rising tensions with Iran.

[Israel Stockpiling Weapons For Possible Attack On Iran](#)

December 03, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel's ministerial committee that oversees defence procurement approved a deal that will allow the air force to purchase Lockheed Martin's CH-53k helicopters at a cost of \$2.4 billion as part of preparations for an anticipated attack on Iran.

[French President Macron: Difficult To Reach Nuclear Deal if Gulf, Israel Not Involved](#)

December 04, 2021, The Times of Israel

In striking comments, French President Emmanuel Macron suggested Israel as well as the Gulf states should be part of discussions on a return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

[Israeli Agents Convinced Iranian Scientists To Blow Up Their Own Nuclear Facilities](#)

December 03, 2021, Arab News

Agents from the Mossad convinced Iranian scientists to blow up their own nuclear facilities by "posing as dissidents" and smuggling explosives disguised as food into facilities.

[Israel's Spyware Hacks Phones of US Officials](#)

December 04, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The iPhones of at least nine senior US officials have been hacked by sophisticated spyware developed by Israeli-based NSO Group, Reuters revealed. The US officials are reportedly employees of the US State Department and the iPhones were hacked in recent months.

[Bangladesh Calls For Recognition of State of Palestine](#)

December 03, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Bangladesh called on the international community to do more to achieve a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian crisis by recognising an independent State of Palestine and its rightful place in the United Nations (UN).

Jordan

[Jordan's FM, US Climate Envoy Discuss Environmental Protection](#)

December 05, 2021, Arab News

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held talks with US special envoy for climate, John Kerry, to discuss environmental protection and confronting climate change.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Bans Entry of Ships Carrying Goods To and from Israel](#)

December 05, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Kuwait has issued a decree banning the entry of commercial vessels carrying goods to and from Israel from its territorial waters.

[Kuwait to UN Session: Peace Through Ridding World of Nuclear Weapons](#)

November 30, 2021, Kuwait Times

Speaking to the Second Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said that his country would continue to adopt measures to lessen the usage of such weapons against humanity.

Lebanon

[Lebanon Minister Kordahi Resigns To Resolve Saudi Arabia Dispute](#)

December 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi, whose criticism of the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen against the Houthi rebels sparked a diplomatic crisis, has announced his resignation, as cash-strapped Lebanon tries to resolve the weeks-long dispute.

Oman

[UAE's Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Meets Foreign Ministers of Oman, India and Sri Lanka](#)

December 05, 2021, Gulf News

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, met with Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al-Busaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Oman, on the sidelines of the two-day Indian Ocean Conference, which is taking place in Abu Dhabi.

Qatar

[Arab Gulf States Compete for Influence in Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan](#)

December 04, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

America's Gulf Arab allies are stepping up their involvement in Afghanistan, expanding their diplomatic presence and resuming flights as competition for influence over the new Taliban administration heats up.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia Opens Consular Section in Kabul](#)

December 01, 2021, Gulf News

Saudi Arabia has announced opening a consular section at its embassy in the Afghan capital Kabul. The move reflects the kingdom's government to provide all consular services to the Afghan people

[Oil Rises As OPEC+ Sticks To January Output Hike](#)

December 02, 2021, CNBC

OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers, an influential group known as OPEC+, decided to stick to a previously agreed upon plan of hiking output by 400,000 barrels per day in January 2022.

[JP Morgan Sees Oil Prices Hitting USD 125 in 2022, USD 150 Per Barrel in 2023](#)

December 02, 2021, Reuters

Oil prices are expected to overshoot \$125 a barrel in 2022 and \$150 in 2023 due to capacity-led shortfalls in OPEC+ production, JP Morgan Global Equity Research said.

[Proposals Sent To Saudi Arabia, 9 Other Nations For Air Bubble Agreement: Union Minister Scindia](#)

December 03, 2021, Hindustan Times

India has sent a proposal to 10 more countries, including Saudi Arabia, for operating flights under the air bubble agreement, the Union government told Parliament. India currently has such agreements with 31 countries.

[France To Work With Saudi Arabia To Resolve Lebanon Crisis](#)

December 04, 2021, AL Jazeera

France and Saudi Arabia have held a joint phone call with Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati, a gesture seen as significant in resolving an unprecedented diplomatic crisis between Riyadh and Beirut.

[I Do Not 'Feel Comfortable' Racing in Saudi Arabia Says F1 Star Lewis Hamilton Citing 'Terrifying' Laws](#)

December 03, 2021, Middle East Monitor

With Saudi Arabia set to host its first ever Formula One Grand Prix race this weekend, Lewis Hamilton has spoken out against Riyadh's human rights record.

The 36-year-old admitted that he does not "feel comfortable" racing in the country as campaigners urge the seven-time world champion to highlight the plight of critics incarcerated within the kingdom.

Syria

[US Military Bases, Troops Come Under Attack in Syria, Iraq](#)

December 05, 2021, Press TV

Two military bases used by US forces in Syria and a convoy of American troops in Iraq have come under attack, amid rising anti-US sentiment in the two neighbouring Arab countries.

Turkey

[Lira Crash Slams Turkey's Factories, Farmers and Retailers](#)

December 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

The Turkish lira has lost more than 45 percent of its value against the United States dollar this year. November witnessed an all-out crash, with the Turkish currency losing nearly 30 percent of its value against the dollar.

[Turkey-Qatar Cooperation To Maximize Deterrence Capabilities: Turkish Defence Minister](#)

December 05, 2021, Daily Sabah

Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said defense cooperation between Turkey and Qatar aims to protect the interests and rights of their people and enhance deterrence capabilities rather than intimidate other countries.

[Turkey Indicts 16 People Suspected of Spying For Israel's Mossad](#)

December 04, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Istanbul's Public Prosecutor indicted 16 people [15 suspects are Palestinians] suspected of spying for Israeli intelligence agency Mossad.

UAE

[UAE Buys Record 80 French Rafale Fighter Aircrafts in \\$19bn Arms Deal](#)

December 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates and France have signed a \$19bn arms deal that will see the Gulf state acquire 80 Rafale fighter jets and 12 military helicopters.

[Attention Invested Has Led To Very Impressive Outcomes: EAM Jaishankar on UAE](#)

December 02, 2021, Hindustan Times

In recent years, the Indian government has assiduously courted several key players in West Asia, including the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar, even as it has built up its strategic relationship with Israel. Efforts have been made to diversify relations with these countries from the traditional field of energy by adding new areas of cooperation.

[50th UAE National Day: Indian FM Attends Golden Jubilee Reception Hosted by Ambassador](#)

December 03, 2021, Khaleej Times

The UAE National Day celebrations in New Delhi began with Dr. Jaishankar congratulating Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, on the 50th National Day.

[EAM Jaishankar Meets Top UAE Leaders, Discusses Ways To Bolster Strategic Ties](#)

December 05, 2021, India Today

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed here and expressed confidence that the bilateral strategic ties between India and the UAE will scale new heights in the years to come.

[US Caution, Rise of China: EAM Jaishankar Lists Developments in Geo-Politics of Indian Ocean Region](#)

December 04, 2021, Mint

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar pointed at the caution America has exercised in their power projection and an effort to correct its overextension, along with the rise of China, as he listed the developments in the geo-politics of the Indian Ocean region at the Indian Ocean Conference 2021 being held at Dubai.

[India, US, UAE, Israel Likely To Meet In Dubai To Discuss Infrastructure: Israeli Ambassador Gilon](#)

December 05, 2021, ANI News

Leaders of the West Asian Quad [India, US, UAE, Israel] are soon likely to meet in Dubai to discuss infrastructure cooperation.

[India, UAE Aim To Conclude Trade Pact Talks Next Week](#)

December 03, 2021, The Economic Times

India and the UAE aim to conclude the negotiations for a free trade pact next week when the two sides meet for the third round of talks in New Delhi, the government said after commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal met representatives of aluminium, copper, chemicals and petrochemicals industry as part of the ongoing stakeholder consultations.

Yemen

[Saudi Coalition Targets IRGC Site In Yemen's Sanaa](#)

November 30, 2021, Reuters

The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen said it launched air raids on "legitimate" Houthi military targets in the capital Sanaa including a "secret" site belonging to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.



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