



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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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.

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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 defence partnership with West Asia-North Africa, Indian Air Force (IAF) is scheduled to participate in exercise 'Blue Flag' involving Israel, Germany, United States, United Kingdom, Greece, France, and Italy. Later in the month IAF will participate in an exercise hosted by Egypt.

To enhance Indian exports, Minister for Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal urged Indian exporters to "aim for exports worth USD 450-500 billion in the next year". In line with this, besides the UAE, India is negotiating free trade agreements with Oman, Russia, Australia, Canada and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) that includes South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland. In another development, Indian Ambassador to Qatar highlighted investment opportunities for the Kingdom under New Delhi's ambitious USD 60 billion energy (gas) infrastructure development plan. He lauded Qatar Investment Authorities' (QIA) look east approach, in particular opportunities for the Indian economy, in the Northfield project, and 2022 FIFA World Cup.

In a development impacting Indian Haj pilgrimage, Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi announced digitisation of complete process for 'Haj 2022' applicants. India sends the second largest number of Haj pilgrims after Indonesia. Meanwhile, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) continues to interfere in India's internal affairs. OIC issued a statement condemning "systematic persecution and violence against the Muslim community in Assam during protests against an eviction drive". India rejected the OIC statement as "factually incorrect and misleading". Reiterating that "OIC has no locus standi in matters concerning India's internal affairs and it should not allow its platform to be subverted by vested interests".

On US-Iran relations, Washington called for an "imminent" return to the Vienna talks aimed at reviving the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Biden Administration reiterated US commitment to diplomatic engagement with Iran, while assuring Israel that Washington could turn to other options if negotiations fail. US however did not specify as to what were the other options. Even as the Biden administration pursues a diplomatic path, Iran's nuclear chief announced production of more than 120 kilogrammes (265 pounds) of 20 percent enriched uranium. Amidst this, Israel Defence Forces vowed to continue military operations against Iran's nuclear program. Israel warned its embassies and missions abroad of "imminent Iranian attacks".

War-torn Iraq held parliamentary elections on October 10 with a low turnout reportedly “demonstrating waning support for the democratic system brought-in following the US-led invasion in 2003”. In a major development, Iraqi security forces arrested Sami Jasim, a senior ISIS leader in charge of terrorist organizations finances and a deputy to former leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

The United States held first face-to-face meeting with Taliban officials in Doha since the Islamist group captured Kabul in August 2021. The talks were described as “candid and professional” with US reiterating that “Taliban would be judged on their actions and not just words” especially about human rights, including meaningful participation of women and girls in society.

On the energy front, crude prices soared to USD 82/barrel, highest in seven years, as the OPEC+ agreed to stick to its original plan to add 400,000 barrels per day to markets in November despite growing calls to further increase supply. Amidst soaring oil prices, Saudi Aramco’s market valuation reached USD 2 trillion, just behind technology giants Microsoft and Apple as the world’s most valuable companies.

The West continues to shun Syrian President Bashar al-Assad; however, there are signs that the UAE, Egypt and Jordan are reviving diplomatic and trade relations with Damascus. UAE and Syria agreed on “future plans to enhance economic cooperation and explore new sectors” for development. Earlier, Jordan’s King received first call from Syrian President in a decade, while Egypt’s Foreign Minister met his Syrian counterpart for the first time in 10 years. The chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan and a perceived lack of security commitment in the Middle East are the major drivers of this change. It is coupled by intensified China challenge and increasing belief that regional countries need to chart their own course. Even as the Arab nations ease Syria’s isolation, Israel allegedly conducted airstrikes near Syrian airbase in Homs, Western Syria where Hezbollah and Iran have a notable presence.

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

Bahrain

[French MPs Condemn Human Rights Violations in Bahrain](#)

October 04, 2021, AL Jazeera

Several French members of parliament urged France's foreign minister to speak out over the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain.

Egypt

[Indian Air Force to Take Part in Exercises in Israel, Egypt](#)

October 05, 2021, WION

The Indian Air force (IAF) will be participating in exercises with Israel and Egypt later this month amidst growing defence engagement in WANA region.

[Egyptian FM's Visit to Moscow Reflects Cairo's Desire to Accommodate Both US, Russia](#)

October 07, 2021, The Arab Weekly

In view of the uncertainties that hang over regional and international issues, Egypt is keen not to rush behind either the United States or Russia. Egyptian Foreign Minister ended a three-day visit to Moscow aimed at recalibrating Egypt's relations with Russia without disrupting the vital relationship with Washington.

Iraq

[Iraqi Forces Arrest Senior ISIS Member Sami Jasim](#)

October 11, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iraqi security forces have arrested a senior member of the ISIL (ISIS) terror group, Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi said. Sami Jasim, who was in charge of the armed group's finances and a deputy of slain leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was arrested outside of the country.

[Polls Close in Iraq's Parliamentary Election After 'Low Turnout'](#)

October 10, 2021, AL Jazeera

Polls closed on Sunday (October 10) in Iraq's parliamentary election with one of the lowest turnouts in years amid waning support for the democratic system brought in following the United States-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

[3 Arrested in J&K For Association With ISIS: NIA](#)

October 10, 2021, The Indian Express

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested three people over their alleged association with the banned terror organisation Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an official said.

Iran

[India Gifts 1 Million Doses of Made-in-India COVAXIN Vaccines to Iran](#)

October 10, 2021, Republic World

The Government of India has gifted one million doses of the made-in India COVAXIN vaccine to Iran, under the 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative taken by India.

[Iran's Nuclear Chief Reports Jump in 20 Percent Enriched Uranium](#)

October 10, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iran has produced more than 120 kilogrammes (265 pounds) of 20 percent enriched uranium, according to its nuclear chief, a considerable increase compared with the IAEA's latest report.

[US Calls For 'Imminent' Return To Nuclear Talks With Iran](#)

October 07, 2021, AL Jazeera

The Biden administration has called for an "imminent" return to talks in Vienna to revive the Iran nuclear deal, but said a resumption of the negotiations is "hinging on the Iranians".

[U.S. Still Committed To Iran Diplomacy But Has Options If It Fails - Biden Administration](#)

October 06, 2021, Reuters

President Joe Biden's national security adviser told his Israeli counterpart that diplomacy is the best way to rein in Iran's nuclear program even as he reaffirmed President Biden's warning to Tehran that Washington could turn to other options if negotiations fail.

[German Chancellor Merkel in Jerusalem: We Are in 'Decisive Weeks' For Iran Nuclear Talks](#)

October 10, 2021, The Times of Israel

During a joint press conference alongside Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in Jerusalem, German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for greater involvement by world powers in pushing Iran back to the negotiating table in Vienna.

[Iran Looking For 'Big Jump' in Russia Relations with Moscow Talks](#)

October 09, 2021, Tehran Times

Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian said the government of President Ebrahim Raisi is ready to quickly expand ties with Russia based on a foreign policy that seeks the same across the region.

Israel

[IDF Chief Vows Israel Will Further Target Iran, Including Its Nuclear Program](#)

October 05, 2021, The Times of Israel

Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi vowed to continue military operations to counter Iran's military capabilities, including its nuclear program.

[Israel Warns Diplomatic Missions of 'Imminent Iranian Attack'](#)

October 08, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The Israeli government warned its diplomatic missions and embassies around the world of what it described as "imminent attacks by Iran."

[Iran 'Concerned' by Israeli 'Presence' in The Caucasus](#)

October 06, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iran has "serious concerns" about Israel's presence in the Caucasus, as tensions mount between Iran and Azerbaijan over Baku's ties with Israel, a major arms supplier.

[Secretary of State Blinken to Hold Trilateral Meeting with Israeli and UAE Counterparts](#)

October 09, 2021, Axios

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will hold a trilateral meeting at the State Department with the foreign ministers of Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

[Mossad Kidnapped an Iranian General to Obtain Info on Ron Arad – Report](#)

October 05, 2021, The Times of Israel

A recent Mossad operation that aimed to discover information about the whereabouts of missing Israeli airman Ron Arad saw agents kidnap an Iranian general for interrogation, according to an Arabic-language report.

[Indo-Israel Relations Strong, Evolving 30 Years On - Deputy Chief of Mission of Israel in India](#)

October 05, 2021, Deccan Chronicle

Over the last decade, India-Israel relations are very visible. The scope has widened, the variety has grown. There is a growing appetite for strengthening bonds between the two countries.

[Nike to Terminate Sales in Israeli Stores](#)

October 04, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Israeli retailers are fuming after international sporting goods giant Nike said it will stop working with them to market its products. The measure will come into effect on May 31, 2022, Nike said.

[Sudan Officials Pay Secret Visit to Israel](#)

October 09, 2021, Middle East Monitor

A Sudanese military delegation has secretly visited Israel and discussed bilateral relations, Al Arabiya TV and Al-Sudani newspaper revealed.

Jordan

[Jordanian King Says He Has Nothing To Hide As Leaked Papers Cite His Wealth](#)

October 05, 2021, Reuters

King Abdullah of Jordan said he had nothing to hide following leaks of financial documents that showed he used offshore accounts to buy expensive properties abroad.

Kuwait

[China Lauds Kuwait's 'Balanced' Foreign Policy](#)

September 29, 2021, Kuwait Times

A senior Chinese official said Kuwait maintains “a wise and balanced” policy vis-a-vis regional and international issues, as shown in its relations with all countries. Kuwait plays a great role in preserving peace and security inside and outside the region, Deputy Minister of Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhu Rui said.

[Kuwait, China Keen on Establishing Institutional Framework: Consul General](#)

September 29, 2021, Kuwait Times

The Consul General of Kuwait in Shanghai Mishal Al-Shamali said that there is a serious need to start implementing the agreements concluded between Kuwait and China by setting a systematic institutional framework for them to develop and strengthen bilateral ties in the upcoming years.

Lebanon

[Power Returns To Lebanon After 24-Hour Blackout](#)

October 10, 2021, BBC

Power has been restored in Lebanon, officials say, after a 24-hour shutdown of the country's energy supply. The energy ministry says the central bank has granted it \$100m (£73m) of credit to buy fuel and keep its power stations operating.

Oman

[India Looks To Sign Free Trade Agreement with Oman](#)

October 10, 2021, The Times of India

Indian Commerce and Industry minister Piyush Goyal added Russia, Oman and the Southern African Customs Union to the growing list of countries and blocs with which India is negotiating trade agreements.

Qatar

[India's USD 60 Billion Energy Infrastructure Development Plan Opens Investment Opportunities For Qatar, Says Indian Ambassador](#)

October 10, 2021, Gulf Times

Investment opportunities are available for Qatar as India aims to develop as a gas-based economy, Indian ambassador Dr. Deepak Mittal said, citing the Indian government's "\$60bn" energy infrastructure development plan.

[U.S. Says Taliban Talks in Doha Were 'Candid and Professional'](#)

October 11, 2021, Reuters

The United States said the first face-to-face meeting between senior U.S. and Taliban officials since the terror group retook power in Afghanistan was "candid and professional" and that the U.S. side reiterated that the Taliban would be judged on their actions, not just their words.

Saudi Arabia

[Haj 2022 Procedure in India To Be Entirely Digital, Union Minister Mukhtar Naqvi Confirms](#)

October 10, 2021, Republic World

The Union Minister of Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi announced on October 9 that the complete procedure for Haj 2022 in India would be digital. Minister Naqvi established an online reservation service at the Haj House in Mumbai and subsequently claimed in a statement that India sends the second-highest percentage of Haj pilgrims after Indonesia.

[Middle East Economies Suffer \\$200bn in Losses from Covid, World Bank Warns](#)

October 08, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Due to the pandemic, the economies of the Middle East and North Africa region will continue to incur losses of around \$200 billion until the end of 2021, the World Bank announced.

[India Slams OIC for Misleading Statement on Eviction Drive in Assam](#)

October 08, 2021, The Economic Times

India hit out at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for its "misleading" statement on an incident relating to an eviction drive in Assam and said the grouping does not have any locus standi to comment on the country's internal matters.

[Saudi Aramco Soars To USD 2 Trillion on Sky-high Oil Prices](#)

October 06, 2021, AL Jazeera

Saudi Aramco's valuation reached USD 2 trillion putting Aramco just behind Microsoft and Apple as the world's most valuable companies. Aramco reached the milestone as crude oil prices climbed to more than \$82 a barrel, the highest in seven years.

[US Crude Prices Jump as OPEC+ Sticks To Existing Oil Output Pact](#)

October 04, 2021, AL Jazeera

The price of oil jumped to around USD 82/barrel after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a grouping known as OPEC+, agreed to stick to its existing plan to add 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil to the global market in November.

Syria

[Arabs Ease Syrian President Assad's Isolation as the US Looks Elsewhere](#)

October 10, 2021, Egypt Independent

While Bashar al-Assad is still shunned by the West who blame him for a decade of brutal war in Syria, a shift is under way in the Middle East where Arab allies of the United States are bringing him in from the cold by reviving economic and diplomatic ties.

[UAE, Syria Agree on Plans To Enhance Economic Cooperation](#)

October 10, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates' economy ministry has said the Gulf state and Syria agreed on future plans to enhance economic cooperation and explore new sectors.

[Iran's Foreign Minister Holds Talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad](#)

October 09, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iran's Foreign Minister Amirabdollahian has held talks on bilateral ties and developments across the region with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus.

[Two Killed as Israeli Airstrikes Target T4 Airbase Near Homs, Syria - Report](#)

October 09, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Syrian air defences responded to alleged Israeli airstrikes targeting Syria's T4 airbase near Homs, Western Syria. Hezbollah and Iran hold a notable military presence at the airbase, according to IDF Radio.

Turkey

[Turkey Due To Test State-of-the-art Multifunctional UAV](#)

October 10, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkey will soon witness a flight test of its new state-of-the-art multifunctional unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), which can be utilized as a self-defence deterrent against drones or used in an assault, said a senior official of a Turkish manufacturing company.

[Turkey Condemns Heinous Terrorist Attack in Afghanistan](#)

October 08, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Turkey condemned the terror attack targeting a mosque during Friday prayers in Afghanistan's northern province of Kunduz.

UAE

[UAE Launches Plan To Achieve Net Zero Emissions by 2050](#)

October 07, 2021, Reuters

The United Arab Emirates announced a plan for net-zero emissions by 2050, and would oversee 600 billion dirhams (\$163 billion) investment in renewable energy.

[Documents Reveal British Politicians Involved in Secret Plan to Place UAE Police Chief as Interpol Head](#)

October 09, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Four former British ministers have been found to be involved in a secret plan to place the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its police chief as the head of Interpol.

Yemen

[Drone Attacks Target Saudi Airport in Jazan](#)

October 09, 2021, AL Jazeera

At least 10 people have been reported injured in attacks on an airport in Saudi Arabia's city of Jazan, near the border with Yemen.

[UN Rights Body Votes to End Probe into Yemen War Crimes](#)

October 08, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Bahrain, Russia and other members of the UN Human Rights Council pushed through a vote to shut down the body's war crimes investigations in Yemen, in a stinging defeat for Western states who sought to keep the mission going.

[Several Killed in Yemen Blast Targeting Aden Governor](#)

October 10, 2021, AL Jazeera

Governor Ahmed Lamlas and Agriculture Minister Salem al-Sugatri, both members of a separatist group in Southern Yemen, survived the "terrorist assassination attempt".



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