



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume IV, Issue 3 | January 17, 2022

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 IV, Issue 3

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.

© 2022 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 IV, Issue 3

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt.....	2
Iraq.....	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	6
Jordan.....	8
Kuwait.....	9
Lebanon.....	10
Oman.....	11
Qatar.....	12
Saudi Arabia.....	13
Syria.....	15
Turkey.....	16
UAE.....	17
Yemen.....	19

Abstract

Highlighting the deepening India-UAE trade partnership, seven government and privately-owned UAE-based companies have committed to invest in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, during his recent visit to Dubai Expo 2020, highlighting the investment potential of Jammu and Kashmir, stressed that the “India-UAE relationship has matured enough over the years to become enduring ‘Global Partners’ in the 21st century”. Meanwhile, India’s ‘Vedanta Group’ is exploring investment opportunities in Saudi Arabia’s mineral sector.

Yemen’s Houthi rebels have reportedly rejected a call by the United Nations to release an Emirati-flagged ship ‘Rwabee’ that they seized earlier in the month, claiming that it carried “military assets”. UAE has described ‘Rwabee’ as a “civilian cargo vessel” carrying equipment to be used at a field hospital. Expressing concern over the safety of seven Indian sailors on board, India’s Ministry of External Affairs has called for the immediate release of the seized vessel. In another development, Houthi rebels have targeted three fuel-carrying tankers at the new Abu Dhabi Airport in a suspected drone attack wounding six and killing two Indians.

Amidst deteriorating relations with the West, the importance of the Middle East is growing in China’s strategic calculus. Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, recently hosted a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) delegation. During their discussions, Beijing and GCC agreed to “establish a strategic partnership while accelerating the bilateral relations to a new level”. Importantly, the two sides agreed to negotiate a free trade agreement (FTA) as soon as possible. Amidst talks about China playing a greater role in the Middle East, Foreign Minister Wang Yi asserted that “there is no power vacuum in the Middle East and the region does not need an external patriarch”. “China’s efforts to maintain stability and promote peace in the region have not and will not stop”, he added. In line with this, Syria joined China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which Xinhua claimed will help Damascus “open broad horizons of cooperation with China and other countries”.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his Iranian counterpart on January 14 in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province of China. The two leaders discussed a broad range of political, economic, trade, regional, and international issues, underlining Tehran’s determination to implement all infrastructure agreements with Beijing.

With regards to talks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, stressed that "there are only a few weeks left to save the 2015 agreement before Tehran's nuclear advances become too difficult to reverse". Even as Washington and Tehran traded charges, open-source intelligence reports point towards, both parties inching closer to an agreement. European Union's Foreign Policy Chief, Josep Borrell, also expressed his belief that "reaching an accord is possible"; Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov echoed similar views underscoring a "real desire between Iran and the United States, to understand concrete concerns and how those could be accounted for in the general package" [agreement]. Contrary to the optimistic views of Russia, Iran, and the EU, French Foreign Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, claimed that "talks were progressing too slowly to be able to reach a result".

Amidst rising regional tensions, Israel and the United States held joint aerial exercises in Southern Israel, simulating air-strikes and mid-air dogfights.

The Abraham Accords have positively impacted bilateral trade and investments between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Reportedly, a major Emirati sovereign wealth fund [Mubadala] has invested USD 100 million in Israeli venture-capital firms in the Technology sector. "The trade between the two countries is forecasted to reach USD 2 billion this year, up from roughly USD 250 million annually before the Abraham Accords". With a view to supporting Arab states to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel, US Congress has established a bipartisan 'Abraham Accords Congressional Caucus'.

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

Bahrain

[China, Bahrain Call To Expand Bilateral Cooperation on All Fronts](#)

January 11, 2022, CGTN

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China appreciates Bahrain's firm adherence to the friendly policy towards China and thanked Bahrain for its solid support on issues involving China's core interests and major concerns.

[China Meets Gulf Oil Bloc with Sights Set on Free-Trade Agreement and Energy Security](#)

January 12, 2022, South China Morning Post (SCMP)

As China scrambles to ensure a stable supply of energy, Beijing is looking to boost bilateral relations with oil-abundant Gulf countries (GCC) by entering into a strategic partnership and expediting the implementation of a free-trade agreement.

Egypt

[President Sisi: Rebuilding Gaza Needs More Than \\$500m Offered by Egypt](#)

January 13, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Reconstructing Gaza needs more than the \$500 million offered by Egypt following the Israeli offensive between 11-21 May 2021, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said.

[Egypt Arrests Member of US-Designated Terror Group After Plane's Emergency Landing](#)

January 15, 2022, The Times of Israel

Egyptian authorities announced the arrest of a prominent member of a US-designated terrorist group, HASM. The terror group is considered to be a splinter of the Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt has long banned and declared the Brotherhood a terrorist organization.

[US Accuses New York Man of Tracking Opponents of Egypt's President Sisi](#)

January 06, 2022, AL Jazeera

Authorities in the United States have arrested an Egyptian-American man from New York on allegations that he unlawfully worked at the behest of the Egyptian government to track the "political opponents" of the country's President, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Iraq

[Iraq: Woman, Child Injured in Rocket Attack on US Embassy](#)

January 14, 2022, AL-Monitor

A woman and child were injured in the latest rocket attack on the US Embassy compound in Baghdad's Green Zone Jan. 13, Iraq's military said.

[Attacks on Iraq Political Party's HQ, Green Zone Raise Security Fears](#)

January 15, 2022, Arab News

An explosion from a hand grenade hit the headquarters of Iraqi parliament speaker Mohammed Halbousi's Taqaddum party in Baghdad.

[Excluding Pro-Iran Parties From Iraq Government Could Ignite Civil War](#)

January 15, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Muqtada Al-Sadr, the Iraqi Shia cleric whose party gained the majority in the latest elections, could rule out pro-Iran Shia parties from the government, according to analysts, which could have catastrophic results.

Iran

[Barter Trade Agreement Between Sri Lanka and Iran To Hit India's Tea Exports To Iran](#)

January 13, 2022, The Economic Times

India's tea exports to Iran, which have halved compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019 due to payment problems, are set to take a further hit this year as Sri Lanka has entered into a barter trade agreement with Iran to pay off its earlier debts against oil purchases.

[Foreign Seafarers Say They Were Tricked Into Servitude On Iranian Ships](#)

January 14, 2022, The Washington Post

Iranian shipping companies in league with international recruiting firms have been forcing large numbers of Indian seafarers to work in dangerous conditions, often with little or no pay, according to more than two dozen men who say they were tricked into taking this employment.

[FM Amir Abdollahian: Iran-China 25-year Partnership Agreement Goes Into Effect](#)

January 15, 2022, Tehran Times

Iranian Foreign Minister, Amir Abdollahian, who was leading a high-ranking delegation, held talks with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In the meeting, the two foreign ministers discussed a broad range of political, economic, trade, consular, cultural, regional and international issues and explored ways of expanding cooperation over those matters.

[Secretary Blinken Says 'A Few Weeks Left' To Save Iran Nuclear Deal](#)

January 14, 2022, AL Jazeera

United States Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, says there are only "a few weeks left" to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal before Tehran's advancements will become too difficult to reverse.

[Trading Threats, The U.S. and Iran Inch Closer To a Nuclear Pact](#)

January 12, 2022, The New York Times

Iran and the United States have recently engaged in a spiralling escalation of threats and warnings, even as they are progressing in diplomatic talks about reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

[Iran Nuclear Talks Enjoy 'Better Atmosphere': EU Foreign Policy Chief Borrell](#)

January 15, 2022, Tehran Times

There has been a marked shift in tone since the current round began in November, even if the Western powers complain how slow the process is.

[Russia Seeking To Hold Iranian-Arab Conference: Russia FM](#)

January 15, 2022, Tehran Times

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has announced that Moscow is seeking to hold an Iranian-Arab conference whose agenda will include the most pressing regional issues.

[President Putin To Host Iranian President Next Week For Talks](#)

January 16, 2022, Reuters

President Vladimir Putin will host his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi for talks in Moscow next week as Russia tries to help salvage a nuclear deal between world powers and Tehran.

[Iran, Venezuela, Six Other UN Members Lose Voting Rights Because of Unpaid Dues](#)

January 12, 2022, Middle East Monitor

UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, identified 11 countries as being in arrears under the terms of the UN Charter, including Antigua and Barbados, Comoros, the Republic of Congo, Guinea, Iran, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Sudan, Vanuatu and Venezuela.

Israel

[Israeli Air Force, US Military Hold Joint Aerial Drill Over Negev](#)

January 16, 2022, The Times of Israel

The Israel Defense Forces and the US military's Central Command held a joint aerial exercise over southern Israel last week, simulating airstrikes and mid-air dogfights.

[US Congress To Promote More Normalisation with Israel](#)

January 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

A group of US lawmakers from both the Senate and the House of Representatives have launched the Abraham Accords Congressional Caucus to encourage more Arab countries to normalise diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

[New US Ambassador to Israel Says 'Absolutely Won't' Visit Settlements, To Avoid Inflaming Tensions](#)

January 14, 2022, The Times of Israel

New US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides said that he'd never visit an Israeli settlement in the West Bank and had no plans to do so, as part of his effort as envoy not to take steps that could inflame the situation on the ground.

[Israel To Give US Secret Weapons Wish List For Purported Use on Iran, Lebanon](#)

January 16, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

The Israeli regime has reportedly prepared a secret wish list of weapon systems that it wants the US to add to the so-called American emergency stockpile in occupied Palestine for purported military action against Iran's civilian nuclear sites and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance group.

[PM Bennett: Israel May Be Forced into a Confrontation with Lebanon, Gaza](#)

January 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

During a meeting of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Prime Minister Bennett did not rule out the need for a military confrontation with Lebanon or Gaza alongside Israel's fight against Iran's nuclear deal.

[Mahmoud Abbas Begins 17th Year as Palestinian President](#)

January 10, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Palestine's veteran President, Mahmoud Abbas, is starting his 17th year in office, amid political difficulties and waning prospects for Palestinian reconciliation. In

January 2005, Abbas was elected as President of the Palestinian Authority with a 62.52 per cent majority, to succeed the late Yasser Arafat.

[Cyberattacks Against Israel Increased in 2021](#)

January 12, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Hackers targeted Israel in 2021 at twice the international rate of cyberattacks. According to Israeli cybersecurity provider Checkpoint, hackers targeted Israel more frequently than France, Japan, the United States and Germany.

[US Abandons Plans for Eastmed Pipeline Due To 'Destabilising' Regional Tensions](#)

January 12, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The United States has seemingly abandoned support for a pipeline project in the eastern Mediterranean which aimed to transport Israeli gas to Europe through Cyprus, voicing its misgivings about such plans in the region.

Jordan

[Middle East Peace Cannot Jump Over Israeli-Palestinian Conflict - Jordan's FM](#)

January 13, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Speaking about the US-Jordan relationship, FM Safadi said Jordan appreciates the positions the Biden administration has taken regarding the two-state solution, the settlements and the decision to restore funding for UNRWA.

Kuwait

[Chinese, Kuwaiti FMs Hold Talks On Bilateral Ties](#)

January 12, 2022, Xinhua

The two sides agreed to strengthen the docking of the BRI with Kuwait's Vision 2035, speed up the formulation of a five-year cooperation plan, and expand cooperation on clean energy, 5G communication, smart cities and other high-tech fields.

Lebanon

[US State Department Denies Energy Deal Brokered Between Israel, Lebanon](#)

January 16, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

The US State Department denied that the US had brokered an energy deal between Israel and Lebanon, after Israeli media reported that Israel may supply natural gas to Lebanon through Jordan.

Oman

[China, Oman To Deepen Win-Win Cooperation](#)

January 14, 2022, CGTN

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi welcomed his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Hamad al-Busaidi, who is currently on a visit in Wuxi City, east China's Jiangsu Province. Wang called on the two countries to deepen win-win cooperation and push for further development of the bilateral strategic partnership.

[Iran FM Visits Oman, Says Tehran Prioritizes Strong Ties with Muscat](#)

January 10, 2022, Tehran Times

Amir Abdollahian described the relations between Tehran and Muscat as long-standing and stable, saying that Iran is interested in promoting political and cultural cooperation to a higher level of economic and trade cooperation in the direction of stable and strong relations.

Qatar

[Qatar Insurance Company, HNIs Acquire Stake in IPO-bound Oyo](#)

January 13, 2022, The Economic Times

A clutch of buyers, including Doha-based insurer Qatar Insurance Company (QIC) and a few high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) and family offices purchased stakes in Oyo during November and December last year, people familiar with the matter said.

[Iran's Foreign Minister in Qatar For Talks After Visiting Oman](#)

January 11, 2022, AL Jazeera

Iran's foreign minister has held high-level talks in Qatar after a visit to Oman, countries that have a history of trying to mediate between Iran and the United States on their 2015 nuclear deal.

[Qatar, Saudi Arabia Withdraw WTO Legal Disputes Amid Regional Reconciliation](#)

January 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Qatar and Saudi Arabia have halted a legal dispute at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) over a case of content piracy, in the latest step to reinforce their reconciliation.

Saudi Arabia

[India's Vedanta Group Plans Investments in Mineral Sector in Saudi Arabia](#)

January 14, 2022, Business Standard

"Vedanta plans to invest in the mineral sector in Saudi Arabia. The company is in discussions to identify investment opportunities in Saudi Arabia, which aims to transform itself into a mineral hub in the Middle East," the statement said.

[UAE and Saudi Arabia Seek Extradition of 19 Indian Nationals](#)

January 12, 2022, The Hindu

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have sought the extradition of 19 Indian nationals for their alleged involvement in criminal cases in the two countries. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered three first information reports (FIRs) in this regard.

[Saudi Wealth Fund Plans to Buy \\$10 Billion in Stocks in 2022](#)

January 12, 2022, Bloomberg

Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund (PIF) is planning to plow deeper into public markets this year by investing about \$10 billion more into listed stocks, according to people familiar with the matter, as it pursues the goal of more than doubling its assets by 2025.

[Visit of Saudi Arabian FM Reflects High-level China-Saudi Arabia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Wang Yi](#)

January 11, 2022, Global Times

Saudi Arabian foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said that China is Saudi Arabia's important strategic and development partner and Riyadh firmly supports the one China Principle, as well as China's proper position on Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and human rights issues.

[Middle East Doesn't Need a New External Chief, China Says as US Pivots to Indo-Pacific](#)

January 16, 2022, South China Morning Post (SCMP)

There is no "power vacuum" in the Middle East and the region does not need an "external patriarch", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, capping a flurry of talks with envoys to strengthen ties with the region.

[6 years after Nimr's execution, Iran and Saudi Arabia 'Preparing To Reopen Embassies'](#)

January 16, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Six years after snapping their diplomatic ties, arch-foes Iran and Saudi Arabia are slowly moving toward rapprochement and preparing to reopen embassies, according to a senior Iranian lawmaker, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, a member of the Iranian Parliament's national security and foreign policy commission.

[China To Appoint Special Envoy To Horn of Africa](#)

January 06, 2022, Hindustan Times

China will appoint a special envoy for the Horn of Africa, a cluster of countries on a key shipping route close to India, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced, a signal that Beijing wants to play a bigger role in the conflict-torn region.

Syria

[Syria Joins China's Belt and Road Initiative](#)

January 13, 2022, Xinhua

Syria joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which will help Damascus open broad horizons of cooperation with China and other countries.

[Iran to UN: US, Israel Preventing Syria from Returning To Normal](#)

January 16, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has warned that the US military presence and Israeli strikes in Syria are hindering a political solution to the crisis gripping the Arab country, calling on the United Nations to act against such unlawful activities.

[11 ISIS Militants Killed in Russian Airstrikes in Eastern Syria](#)

January 14, 2022, Middle East Monitor

At least 11 fighters from the Islamic State militant group – Daesh – were killed and 20 more were wounded in Russian air raids in Eastern Syria.

[UN Secretary-General Says 90 Percent Syrians Live Below Poverty Line](#)

January 14, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, warned that 90 percent of Syrians live below the poverty line, while 60 percent of Syrians suffer from food insecurity.

Turkey

[Turkey Won't Allow Terrorist Acts Targeting China on Turkish Soil: MOFA](#)

January 14, 2022, CGTN

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson answered questions about Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu's recent visit to China, and said Ankara promised not to allow violent terrorist acts targeting China or anti-China activities that harm China's territorial integrity on Turkish soil.

[President Erdogan Blames Turkey's Currency Problems on 'Foreign Financial Tools' as Central Bank Reserves Fall](#)

January 13, 2022, CNBC

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pledged to bring down his country's soaring inflation, which hit 36 percent in December, as the country's central bank gears up for another rate-setting meeting next week.

[Turkey Launches First Intelligence-Gathering Ship Amid Eastern Mediterranean Tensions](#)

January 14, 2022, Middle East Eye

Turkey's first intelligence-gathering ship TCG Ufuk entered service, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan saying it will be used by the MIT intelligence service to monitor the seas around his country.

[Pakistan Cancels Turkish Chopper Deal Amid US License Deadlock](#)

January 06, 2022, Daily Sabah

Pakistan has reportedly ditched a \$1.5 billion deal to acquire a total of 30 attack helicopters from Turkey due to a U.S. embargo on the choppers' engines, opting for Chinese-made aircraft instead.

UAE

[UAE Investment a Sign that OIC Countries Are Seeing Kashmir as Integral Part of India](#)

January 11, 2022, News 18

Addressing the Investors and Business Leaders Summit at Dubai Expo 2020, Indian Union Territory of J&K's LG Manoj Sinha said, "The relationship between India and the UAE has matured enough over the years to become enduring 'Global Partners' in the 21st century. These are those times in the journey of Jammu and Kashmir where opportunities are in plenty."

[Abu Dhabi Airport Drone Attack: Two Indians, One Pakistani National Dead as Houthi Rebels Strike UAE](#)

January 17, 2022, Times Now

Three people - one Pakistani and two Indian nationals - were killed, and six others were wounded when a suspected drone attack was reported at Abu Dhabi's new International Airport on Monday (January 17).

['Govt Making All Effort To Secure Release of Indian Sailors on UAE Ship Seized By Houthis'](#)

January 11, 2022, Hindustan Times

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that the government was making all efforts to secure the early release of Indian sailors who were onboard the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-flagged ship Rwabee that has been seized by Houthis.

[Chinese, UAE Foreign Ministers Discuss Bilateral Cooperation Over Phone](#)

January 13, 2022, Xinhua

China appreciates the UAE's support for the smooth going of the National Day of China Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, Wang said, adding China will continue to support the UAE in making the Expo one of the most successful Expos to help the UAE enhance its international status and influence, and open up new space for diversified development.

[UAE Invested \\$100 Million In Israel's Tech Sector As Both Countries Get Closer](#)

January 14, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

A major United Arab Emirates sovereign-wealth fund, Mubadala, has invested roughly \$100 million in venture-capital firms in Israel's technology sector, according to people familiar with the investments, a fresh sign of deepening

business and investment ties between the countries at the forefront of the Abraham Accords.

Yemen

[Yemen's Houthis Reject UN Call To Free UAE-Flagged Ship](#)

January 16, 2022, AL Jazeera

Yemeni Houthi rebels have rejected a UN request to release an Emirati-flagged vessel they seized earlier this month, along with its 11-member crew, saying the ship was carrying "military assets".

[Fighting in Yemen's Marib Intensifies Amid Government Advances](#)

January 16, 2022, AL Jazeera

Yemeni Houthi rebels have rejected a UN request to release an Emirati-flagged vessel they seized earlier this month, along with its 11-member crew, saying the ship was carrying "military assets".

[Sales Executive from Karnataka Booked for Visiting Yemen](#)

January 16, 2022, The Hindu

A sales executive who visited Yemen while working in Saudi Arabia was caught when he landed at Kempegowda International Airport on January 14. When authorities checked his passport and documents, immigration officials saw that while he had arrived from Sharjah, he had visited Yemen for a week.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org