



# 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

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://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.

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

In an unprecedented development with great significance for European Security, Russian forces invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. President Putin put the pretext of his military action as the “demilitarization and denazification” of Ukraine. According to the Russian state media, Kremlin took this decision “at the request of ‘Donetsk’ and ‘Lugansk’, two-breakaway republics in Eastern Ukraine”. Amidst the continued violence in Eastern Ukraine, India, UAE, and China abstained from the US and Albania sponsored resolution in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) condemning Russia. India’s Permanent Representative to the UN, without naming Russia stressed that “India is deeply disturbed by the recent turn of developments in Ukraine” and “regretted that the path of diplomacy was given up”. Further, New Delhi reminded that “dialogue is the only answer to settle differences and disputes while urging efforts for the immediate cessation of violence and hostilities”.

Iran refused to outrightly denounce Russian actions claiming that the “Eurasia region is on the verge of entering a pervasive crisis because of NATO’s Eastward movement led by the US”. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad praised Moscow and described President Putin’s actions as a “correction of history and restoration of the balance in the world that was lost after the breakup of the Soviet Union”. As pressure mounted from the West, Israel reluctantly condemned the Russian attack as a “serious violation of the international order”. Even as the two countries sparred internationally, Israel-Russia military coordination is likely to continue in Syria. Meanwhile, Turkey urged Russia to halt attacks on Ukraine, while GCC countries including Saudi Arabia remained largely quiet on this issue.

Continuing the deepening India-Oman defence partnership, two sides successfully conducted the ‘Eastern Bridge-VI’ air exercise at Air Force Station, Jodhpur. In another development, the Speaker of the lower house of the Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha), Om Birla, addressed a session of UAE’s Federal National Council underscoring the strong bond between New Delhi and Abu Dhabi.

On US-Iran relations, Washington continued to highlight the progress being made on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) while reiterating concerns about certain “serious issues still remaining”. The events in Eastern Europe have not yet impacted the JCPOA talks and Washington is likely to continue engagement with Moscow to substantially contain Iran’s nuclear

programme. "Russian invasion of Ukraine does not give Iran the green light to develop a nuclear weapon", State Department warned.

As noted in earlier issues of West Asia Review, crude prices breached the USD 100/barrel mark over the past week. It is to be noted that "India's crude import bill is likely to cross USD 100 billion in the fiscal year 2021-22 denting macroeconomic parameters such as current account deficit. Even as the geopolitical tensions mount in Europe, several key OPEC+ members are reluctant to increase crude output. Amidst unprecedented western sanctions on Russia, it remains to be seen as to what action OPEC+ including Russia will take regarding oil output in the group's next meeting scheduled to be held on March 2, 2022.

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

## Bahrain

### [Israel's Mossad is Operating in Bahrain, Confirms Senior Official](#)

February 23, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Sheikh Abdulla Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Bahrain's undersecretary for political affairs, made the announcement in the presence of Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz in Germany at the Munich Security Conference.

## Egypt

### [Egypt Calls for an Emergency Arab League Meeting on Ukraine](#)

February 27, 2022, Reuters

Egypt called for an emergency Arab League meeting at the delegate level to discuss developments in Ukraine, according to a statement from the Egyptian foreign ministry.

### [Russia, Ukraine Crisis Might Give India Opportunity To Export More Wheat](#)

February 25, 2022, Business Standard

The Russia-Ukraine conflict would have nil or negligible impact on India's foreign trade, and the crisis may give domestic exporters an opportunity to ship more wheat in the global markets, sources said.

### [Former Adviser to Israel's Defence Ministry: 'Egyptian Mediation Has Delayed Gaza Escalation'](#)

February 02, 2022, Jewish News Syndicate

Egyptian mediation efforts and a delegation of intelligence officials visiting the Gaza Strip and Israel have been able to delay a new security escalation between Gazan terror factions and Israel, a former Israeli defense official said.

## Iraq

### [‘Political Impasse’ Hampering Change and Reform in Iraq](#)

February 24, 2022, UN News

Political leaders in Iraq must urgently overcome their divisions and work for the good of the people, the top UN official in the country told the Security Council.

### [OPEC+ Sees No Need To Pump Faster as Oil Heads Toward \\$100](#)

February 22, 2022, Bloomberg

Several key OPEC+ members see no need to accelerate output increases even as oil heads toward \$100 a barrel amid worsening tension over Ukraine.

### [‘Double Standards’: Western Coverage of Ukraine War Criticised](#)

February 27, 2022, AL Jazeera

While commenting on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, a CBS reporter said “this isn’t a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilised, relatively European – I have to choose those words carefully, too – a city where you wouldn’t expect that, or hope that it’s going to happen.”



## Iran

### [India Plans Urea Import Deal with Iran Using Rupee Payments](#)

February 24, 2022, Reuters

India plans to pay in rupees for its first long-term urea import deal with Iran to hedge itself from global supply disruptions, higher prices and forex volatilities, sources familiar with the matter said.

### [Rooted in NATO's Provocations: Iran Responds to Russia's Attack on Ukraine](#)

February 24, 2022, AL Jazeera

Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian said the Ukraine crisis is "rooted in NATO's provocations".

### [Progress Toward Iran Nuclear Deal, But Issues Remain: US Official](#)

February 27, 2022, Arab News

Negotiators have made significant progress in the last week or so on an agreement to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal but very tough issues remain, a senior US State Department official has said.

### [Russian Invasion of Ukraine Not A Green Light For Iranian Nuclear Weapon: US State Dept](#)

February 25, 2022, Arab News

The US will continue to engage with Russia over efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, even though Moscow's invasion of Ukraine had made it a "pariah on the world stage," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.

### [Iran Nuclear Talks So Far Unaffected by US-Russia Showdown](#)

February 24, 2022, AL Monitor

While the Biden administration has imposed an array of sanctions on Russia for its actions in Ukraine, the US and Russia remain mostly aligned in pressing ahead to close an Iran nuclear deal in Vienna.

### [Iran Says Can React Quickly If US Quits Nuclear Deal Again](#)

February 25, 2022, The Times of Israel

Iran can resume production of highly enriched uranium "at any moment" if the US again pulls out of a nuclear deal with major powers, its atomic energy chief says.

[US Would Not Have Chosen 'Embarrassing' Afghanistan Pull-out If It Could, Iran FM tells Press TV](#)

February 27, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has dismissed US claims that its withdrawal from Afghanistan had all been planned beforehand, saying they would not have opted for such an “embarrassing” pull-out if they had other choices.

## Israel

### [Russia Says Israel Offered to Mediate in Ukraine Crisis](#)

February 27, 2022, Reuters

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett offered to mediate an end to the Ukraine hostilities during a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Kremlin said.

### [Israel Reluctantly Condemns Russia Over Ukraine](#)

February 25, 2022, AL Monitor

Israel's feeble response to the Russian aggression prompted significant criticism in the West. Foreign Minister Lapid was subjected to biting comments from European colleagues over Israel's neutrality.

### [Russia Says Military Coordination with Israel in Syria Will Continue as Usual](#)

February 27, 2022, The Times of Israel

The Russian Embassy in Israel said that military coordination with Israel in Syria will continue, even as the two countries spar over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### [The Middle East is Realigning as Israel's Ties with Other Nations Warm](#)

February 19, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

According to Israel's former NSA Meir Ben-Shabbat, "we are now seeing the start of a reorganisation of the camps in the Middle East... the pragmatic Sunni camp – consisting of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Gulf states (excluding Qatar) – is establishing a partnership with Turkey and Qatar – which will also incorporate Israel... This new reorganisation blurs the traditional dividing lines between the camps."

### [Iran's IRGC Hacks CCTV at Israel's Haifa, Ashdod Ports](#)

February 24, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Hackers affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have published videos obtained from security cameras at two of Israel's largest seaports, in addition to leaking details of hundreds of workers at the sites.

### [UN Envoy Voices Concern About Israeli Settler Violence in Palestinian Territories](#)

February 24, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, has expressed concern about the continuing destabilising

deterioration in the occupied Palestinian territories, and the Israeli settlers' continuing violence against the Palestinians.

## Jordan

### [Ukrainian Crisis Hits Jordanian Students, Imports](#)

February 27, 2022, Arab News

Jordanian experts warned that some goods such as wheat and barley will jump in price owing to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Thousands of Jordanians, many of them students, are also attempting to flee the country with Foreign Ministry's support.

## Kuwait

### [US to Build Kuwait's New Defence Ministry HQ Worth \\$1 billion](#)

February 24, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Kuwait's new defence ministry headquarters is to be designed and constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers and other US-based contractors following the approval of a proposal by the Biden administration, worth an estimated \$1 billion.

### [From Kuwait Airlift in 1990 to Operation Ganga in Ukraine: 5 Major Evacuation Missions Carried Out by India](#)

February 27, 2022, DNA India

As tensions between Russia and Ukraine remain heightened, the Indian government is conducting an evacuation mission to bring back all the Indian nationals currently stranded in the country in the middle of war-like conditions. Similar operations were conducted in Kuwait in 1990.

## Lebanon

### [Hamas, Hezbollah Leaders Meet in Lebanon to Discuss Israel](#)

February 27, 2022, Jewish News Syndicate

Hezbollah-affiliated media outlets reported that the sides discussed events in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, along with the future of the conflict with Israel and the political situation in the Middle East.

### [Lebanon's Hezbollah Rejects Foreign Minister's Condemnation of Ukraine Invasion](#)

February 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Lebanon's Hezbollah movement has rejected a statement issued by the country's Foreign Ministry condemning Russia's invasion and on-going military operations in Ukraine.

## Oman

### [India, Oman Hold Five-day Air Exercise 'Eastern Bridge-VI' in Jodhpur](#)

February 26, 2022, The Economic Times

The Indo-Oman exercise, Eastern Bridge-VI (2022) was successfully conducted at Air Force Station Jodhpur from 21 to 25 February 2022, informed India's Ministry of Defence.

### [Crude Prices Hit USD 100 Mark Amid Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#)

February 25, 2022, Mint

The cost of the Indian basket of crude, comprising Oman, Dubai and Brent crude, was at \$100.71 per barrel on Thursday (February 24).



## Qatar

### [Indian Passengers from Ukraine Can Return Via Qatar, Says Govt](#)

February 24, 2022, India Today

The Centre said Indian passengers from Ukraine can return via Qatar, with aviation industry experts stating that civilian flights will restart from Ukraine only when its airspace opens. Currently, 20,000 Indians, mostly students, are stranded in Ukraine.

### [Qatar Says "Almost Impossible" To Quickly Replace Russian Supplies of LNG to Europe](#)

February 22, 2022, Reuters

Neither Qatar nor any other single country has the capacity to replace Russian gas supplies to Europe with liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the event of disruption due to a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Qatar's energy minister said.

### [The Ukraine Crisis is Vindicating Qatar's Bold Gas Expansion Strategy](#)

February 24, 2022, The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

In the long term, Qatar could play a pivotal role in diversifying European gas imports away from Russia.

## Saudi Arabia

### [Ukraine Crisis: Saudi Arabia, UAE Divided Over Choice Between US and Russia](#)

February 27, 2022, Firstpost

As the world rushed to condemn the Russian invasion of its smaller neighbour, the wealthy Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have largely kept quiet.

### [India's Oil Import Bill To Top \\$100 Billion in Current Fiscal](#)

February 28, 2022, Times Now

India's crude oil import bill is set to exceed \$ 100 billion in the current fiscal year ending March 31, almost double its spending last year, as international oil prices trade at seven-year highs.

### [Riyadh Confirms Commitment To 'OPEC Plus' Deal With Russia](#)

February 28, 2022, Middle East Eye

Saudi Arabia confirmed its commitment to the OPEC+ agreement with Russia, the Saudi Press Agency reported, as Moscow faces international criticism over its invasion of Ukraine. OPEC+ is scheduled to meet on March 2.

### [The White House Statement on Middle East and North Africa Coordinator McGurk's Travel to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates](#)

February 17, 2022, The White House

Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk travelled this week to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to ensure the United States is doing everything possible to support the territorial defence of both countries against Iranian-enabled missile and UAV attacks.

### [Saudi Pressure Prompts Pakistan To Get Tough With Iran](#)

February 21, 2022, Middle East Eye

Attacks by Iran-based Baloch rebels, along with Saudi economic and diplomatic pressure, is turning Islamabad against Tehran.

## Syria

### [‘Correction of History’: Syrian President Praises Ukraine invasion](#)

February 25, 2022, AL Jazeera

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad told Putin that what was happening in Ukraine was a “correction of history and restoration of balance which was lost in the world after the breakup of the Soviet Union”.

### [Syria Backs Russian Recognition of East Ukraine Breakaway Regions](#)

February 22, 2022, AL Jazeera

Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad was quoted as saying that the government of President Bashar al-Assad “will cooperate” with the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR).

## Turkey

### [Turkey Urges Russia To Halt Attacks On Ukraine, Calls For Talks](#)

February 22, 2022, Daily Sabah

Turkey has described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a 'war' in a shift of rhetoric as it continues to call for a diplomatic solution and cease-fire to prevent further violence.

### [Turkey Says Cannot Stop Russian Warships Accessing Black Sea](#)

February 25, 2022, AL Jazeera

The Turkish foreign minister has said Turkey cannot stop Russian warships accessing the Black Sea via its straits, as Ukraine has requested, due to a clause in an international pact.

### [Uncertainty Shrouds Tata's Air India CEO Pick, a Plan B May Be Needed](#)

February 23, 2022, The Economic Times

The appointment of Turkish expat Ilker Ayci as CEO of Air India may hit turbulent weather over government approvals and security clearances, for which Tata Sons is understood to have made the requisite applications, top officials close to the development said.

## UAE

### [India Abstains on Resolution Condemning Russian Invasion of Ukraine, Joins China and UAE](#)

February 26, 2022, DNA

Apart from China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), India has also abstained from a Security Council resolution condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The resolution proposed by the US and Albania with the backing of nearly 60 countries received 11 votes in favour, giving it a majority in the 15-member Council, but was nullified by the Russian veto.

### [UAE, India Parliaments To Strengthen Ties With New Committee](#)

February 22, 2022, Khaleej Times

Om Birla, the speaker of the lower house of the Indian Parliament, addressed a session of UAE's Federal National Council, hailing how the ties between India and the UAE have grown by leaps and bounds through the years.

### [Abu Dhabi Hindu Temple Ideal Example of Global Harmony: Indian Parliament Speaker Birla](#)

February 24, 2022, Khaleej Times

Indian Parliament Speaker Om Birla and a 17-member delegation paid a visit to the under-construction BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi.

### [UAE To Buy Chinese L-15 Supersonic Jets Despite US Pressure](#)

February 24, 2022, Global Times

The UAE Ministry of Defense intends to buy 12 L-15 Chinese aircraft, with the option for 36 additional aircraft of the same type in the future.

## Yemen

### [US Issues New Sanctions on Alleged Houthi Financing Network](#)

February 23, 2022, AL Jazeera

The United States has issued fresh sanctions on alleged members of an illicit network financing Yemen's Houthi rebels, citing the group's involvement in the continuing war in Yemen and recent drone and missile attacks on Washington's Gulf allies.

### [UN Security Council to Vote on Houthi Arms Embargo](#)

February 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The United Nations Security Council is due to vote Monday (February 28) on a proposal by the United Arab Emirates to impose an arms embargo on Yemen's Houthis after the group claimed several drone and missile assaults on the country this year.

### [Houthi Leader: US, Israel Use Some Arab States as Tools to Plot Against Muslims](#)

February 27, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

The leader of Yemen's Ansarullah movement (Houthis), Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, says the United States and Israel use certain regional Arab states as tools to implement their plots against the Muslim world.



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