

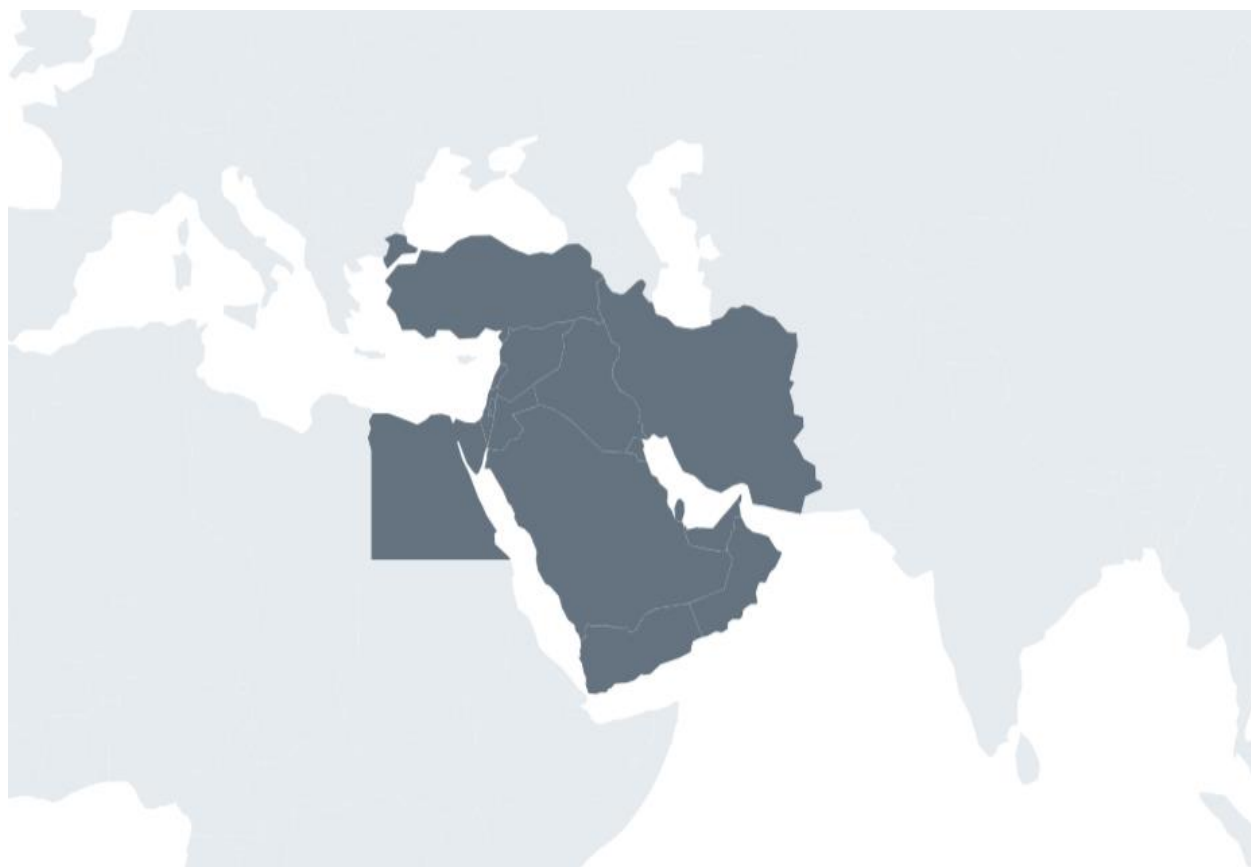


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume IV, Issue 11 | March 14, 2022

Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



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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

On the eve of demitting his appointment, Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, underscored the deep strategic partnership between New Delhi and Riyadh resulting in the “all-round growth and progress in the bilateral relations including people-to-people contact”. Meanwhile, Lebanon reached out to India to secure wheat supply as Beirut faced a grim situation owing to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

On US-Iran relations, Washington condemned the Iranian ballistic missile attack on the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Open-source intelligence highlighted 12 missiles hitting the town of Erbil, with some even landing near the new US consulate. No casualties were reported. Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) took responsibility for the attack with state media claiming “missiles hit secret bases of the ‘Mossad’, including fatalities among the Mossad officers”. In response to this unprovoked attack, the US National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, asserted that “Washington was working to help Iraq get air-defence systems”. This attack came in the aftermath of Israeli airstrikes in Syria that killed two IRGC officers in the past week.

The future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) still remains uncertain. Even as the EU claimed that the “final text [of the agreement] was essentially ready and on the table”, the talks in Vienna have been “paused” blaming external factors mainly the Russian demands about protection from sanctions on trade with Iran. On its part, the United States reiterated that sanctions imposed on Russia for invading Ukraine are “unrelated” to Iran deal and “should not have any impact on its implementation”.

The diplomatic efforts to mediate between Kyiv and Moscow to end hostilities continued. Turkey hosted foreign ministers of the two countries in Antalya without much progress. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, proposed a meeting with Russian President, Vladimir Putin in Jerusalem. He also slammed Russia for hiring “murderers” (mercenaries) from Syria to fight in Ukraine. In the meantime, Western leaders continued to express serious concerns over the possibilities of Moscow authorizing the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine.

Amidst unprecedented Western sanctions on Russia, the United States is alarmed over Israel offering a safe harbour for Russian oligarchs. As private jets keep

arriving from Russia to Tel Aviv, the US Undersecretary of State, Victoria Nuland, warned Israel against taking in "dirty money" fueling Putin's war and called on the Jewish state to join western sanctions against Moscow. In another development, cryptocurrency holders from Russia are reportedly requesting UAE-based firms to liquidate digital assets worth billions of dollars.

US relations with Saudi Arabia and UAE are facing a stress test, as the leaders of these two important Gulf countries ignored calls from President Biden, over ratcheting up oil production to ease global energy prices. Rejecting this, 'The White House' clarified that there were no problems in communication between President Biden and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. It also added, "President Biden did not call Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, but rather his father, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, the call took place on February 9". In another development, Saudi Arabia executed 81 people including scores of Shias in a single day on charges including "allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations" and holding "deviant beliefs". In light of this, Iran has suspended all talks with Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, ISIS has announced 'Abu Al-Hassan Al-Hashemi al-Quraishi' as the terror group's new caliph.

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain Joins US-Led Artemis Accords on Responsible Space Exploration](#)

March 07, 2022, The National

Bahrain has become the second Arab country to sign the US-led Artemis Accords, an international treaty that outlines peaceful and responsible space exploration.

[Readout of the U.S.-Bahrain Military Consultative Committee](#)

March 08, 2022, US Department of Defence

U.S. and Bahraini leaders reaffirmed the strength of the bilateral strategic partnership. The delegations discussed a range of topics critical to the U.S.-Bahrain defence relationship, including threats from Iran's missile program, the proliferation of drones, and the ongoing cultivation of violent non-state groups throughout the region.

Egypt

[U.S. Senate Backs \\$2.2 Billion Military Sale to Egypt](#)

March 11, 2022, Reuters

The Senate backed the \$2.2 billion sale of C-130 Super Hercules planes to Egypt, voting 81-18 against an effort to block the deal over human rights concerns.

[Egypt Seeks Middle Ground Between US, Russia as Ukraine Fighting Rages](#)

March 11, 2022, AL Monitor

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin held a phone conversation on March 9, a few days after Egypt voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

[Egypt Bans Export of Wheat and Other Staples for Three Months](#)

March 10, 2022, The National News

Alarm over the impact of Ukraine war has been cited for the rising prices since 80 per cent of Egypt's wheat imports - about 13 million tonnes in 2021 - came from Russia and Ukraine.

[Egypt and China to Establish Africa's Largest Cold Storage Facility for Vaccines](#)

March 09, 2022, Daily News Egypt

The Chinese Ambassador to Egypt said that the two countries are cooperating to establish the largest cold storage facility for vaccines and serums in Africa.

[China's Promotion of Russian Disinformation Indicates Where Its Loyalties Lie](#)

March 10, 2022, Egypt Independent

Major state-run Chinese news media outlets – which dominate the country's highly censored media space – have been largely echoing Russian state media stories or information from Russian officials.

Iraq

[Ballistic Missiles Hit Mossad Bases in Iraq's Erbil](#)

March 13, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

Iraqi media say a dozen ballistic missiles have hit secret bases of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, with reports of fatalities among Mossad officers there.

[Iran Attacks Iraq's Erbil with Missiles in Warning to U.S., Allies](#)

March 14, 2022, Reuters

The missiles came down in areas near a new U.S. consulate building, according to Kurdish officials. U.S. officials said no Americans were hurt and nor were U.S. facilities hit.

[Statement by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Iran Missile Attack on Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#)

March 13, 2022, The White House

The United States condemns in the strongest terms Iran's missile attack on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This attack targeted a civilian residence in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region's capital city, without any justification.

[U.S. Working to Help Iraq Get Missile Defence Capabilities - NSA Sullivan](#)

March 14, 2022, Reuters

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Washington was working to help Iraq get missile defence capabilities to defend itself.

Iran

[Iran Nuclear Talks Stumble as US Rebuffs Russian Demands](#)

March 14, 2022, Financial Times

The US has ruled out offering any sanctions relief to Russia in order to clinch its support for an agreement to revive the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, rebuffing a last-minute demand from Moscow.

['Israel Will Pay,' Iran Warns After IRGC Officers Killed in Syria Strike](#)

March 09, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

The Israeli Air Force and its Air Defence Command have raised their alert following Iran's warning that it will avenge the deaths of two Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers killed in an alleged Israeli airstrike earlier this week near Damascus.

[Oil Declines as Iran, Russia and Fed Jostle for Limelight](#)

March 14, 2022, Mint

Crude Futures in New York fell below \$108 a barrel following a tumultuous week that saw prices whipsaw wildly. The halt in Iran nuclear talks dashed hopes for a swift return of more supply to a tight market reeling from the war in Ukraine.

[Taliban To Participate in Third Regional Meeting on Afghanistan in China](#)

March 12, 2022, Business Standard

The acting Foreign Minister of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi will be attending the third regional meeting on Afghanistan to be held in China later this month.

[Iran Suspends Talks with Saudi Arabia, Slams Riyadh's Executions](#)

March 13, 2022, Middle East Eye

Iran has suspended talks with regional rival Saudi Arabia, a website affiliated to Iran's top security body reported, without giving a reason for the decision that comes as the fifth round of negotiations was due to start this week.

Israel

[Russia Open to Ukraine Negotiations in Jerusalem](#)

March 13, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Russia has been open to holding negotiations with Ukraine in Jerusalem, a senior diplomatic source said, soon after Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke on the phone.

[U.S. Growing Alarmed Over Israel's Safe Harbour for Russian Oligarchs](#)

March 13, 2022, Haaretz

Washington is signalling to Israel that joining the economic pressure on Putin's regime, including the oligarchs closest to him, is more important than mediating between Russia and Ukraine.

[Ukrainian Ambassador: Israel is Scared of Russia, Isn't Sole Mediator, Shouldn't be Neutral](#)

March 11, 2022, The Times of Israel

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky "does not" understand Israel's refusal to provide defensive equipment, such as helmets and flak jackets, to Ukraine, Amb. Korniychuk said in a briefing with reporters.

[US House Approves \\$1 Billion For Israel's Iron Dome After Months-Long Delay](#)

March 10, 2022, The Times of Israel

After months of delay due to internal political disputes, the US House of Representatives approved an additional \$1 billion in funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system.

[Israel-UAE Free Trade Agreement Could Be Finalised in Three Months: Dr. Ron Malka](#)

March 11, 2022, The Arabian Business

Director General of Israel's Ministry of Economy and Industry, Dr. Ron Malka, shares how trade growth between the two countries is likely to diversify further into the sectors of agro-tech, water management, bio-med, and robotics.

[Jerusalem Mufti Slams Former US Vice President Pence for Ibrahimi Mosque Visit in Hebron Tour with Israeli Lawmakers](#)

March 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The Palestinian Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, condemned the visit by former US Vice President, Mike Pence, to the Ibrahimi Mosque in the West Bank city of Hebron.

Jordan

[Israeli Foreign Minister, Jordanian King Discuss Jerusalem Tensions](#)

March 10, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The visit came "ahead of Ramadan and in light of reports of growing tensions in Jerusalem", the Israeli Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

[Jordan's Prince Hamzah Apologises to King for His Plot 'Mistake'](#)

March 08, 2022, Middle East Eye

Jordan said that King Abdullah II had received a letter of apology from Prince Hamzah, who last year was accused of conspiring to destabilise the country and remove its long-time monarch.

[India Looks Towards Canada, Jordan for Fertilisers as Russia-Ukraine Conflict Derails Imports](#)

March 02, 2022, Moneycontrol

India depends heavily on imports for meeting its fertiliser needs; with low self-sufficiency, volatility in global fertiliser supplies is bound to have a significant impact on the country.

Kuwait

[How Much Extra Oil Could OPEC+ Pump to Cool Prices?](#)

March 11, 2022, Reuters

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are among the few oil producers globally with spare capacity that they could draw on quickly to increase output, help offset supply losses from Russia or elsewhere and ease prices.

[Loss of Russian Oil Leaves a Void Not Easily Filled, Straining Market](#)

March 09, 2022, The New York Times

An energy price shock will probably last as long as the confrontation goes on, since there are few alternatives to quickly replace Russia's exports of roughly five million barrels a day.

Lebanon

[Lebanon Holds Talks With Turkey, India Over Wheat Supply Crisis](#)

March 09, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Lebanese Minister of Economy and Trade, Amin Salam, has met with the ambassadors of Turkey and India and discussed ways to support Lebanon during the wheat supply crisis resulting from the Russian military operation in Ukraine.

[Lebanon Political Factions Gear Up for May Elections](#)

March 13, 2022, Arab News

More than 500 candidates, including 69 women, have applied to contest Lebanese parliamentary elections scheduled to be held on May 15, 2022.

Oman

[Middle East Nations Refrain from Sanctioning Russia](#)

March 14, 2022, The Times of Oman

Except for Syria and Iran - which supported Russia or blamed the war on NATO - almost all countries of the Middle East have disappointed the United States, the European Union, Canada, and the West in general, on the issue of imposing sanctions on Russia.

Qatar

[President Biden Designates Qatar, Colombia as 'Major Non-NATO Allies' of US](#)

March 11, 2022, TRT World

President Joe Biden has designated Qatar and Colombia as major non-NATO allies of the US, opening the door to closer military and commercial ties with both countries.

[Germany Discusses Energy Cooperation with Qatar](#)

March 13, 2022, Doha News

As Berlin looks to reroute its energy supply from Russian oil and gas industries, leading LNG supplier, Qatar, and Germany discuss energy supplies, according to the federal chancellery's state secretary, Joerg Kukies.

[Italy Looks to Boost Energy Ties with Qatar in Wake of Ukraine Crisis](#)

March 06, 2022, Reuters

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio flew to Qatar for two days of talks on boosting energy cooperation as Rome stepped up efforts to secure new gas supplies in light of the Ukraine crisis.

[Russia-Ukraine War: Qatar to Hold Talks in Moscow on Iran Nuclear Deal](#)

March 13, 2022, Middle East Eye

Hours before leaving for Russia, FM Thani spoke with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian about Russia's new demands on the Iran talks, which Moscow has linked to sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia and UAE Leaders 'Reject Calls with US President Biden'](#)

March 09, 2022, Middle East Eye

Although the calls were intended to focus on building international support for Ukraine and the control of surging oil prices, the leaders of both Gulf countries reportedly declined US requests to speak to the President.

[US Says Gulf Leaders Did Not Ignore Calls from President Biden](#)

March 10, 2022, Middle East Monitor

According to US National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne, Biden did not try to call Bin Salman, but rather his father, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz. The call actually took place on 9 February, she pointed out.

[Outgoing Indian Ambassador Gratified on Accomplishing Deepening Strategic Partnership with Saudi Arabia](#)

March 13, 2022, Saudi Gazette

Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, voiced his gratification over the strong pitch and vibrant steam that have gathered in the bilateral ties after taking it to new heights of strategic partnership during his tenure.

[Saudi Arabia Executes 81 People in a Single Day](#)

March 12, 2022, AL Jazeera

Saudi Arabia has executed 81 men over the past 24 hours, including seven Yemenis and one Syrian national, on charges including "allegiance to foreign terrorist organisations" and holding "deviant beliefs", state news agency Saudi Press Agency said.

[Huge Crowds Hold Funeral for Executed Saudi Men in Qatif](#)

March 13, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

Social media users have circulated videos showing a massive funeral ceremony held for a number of Saudi dissidents, who were recently executed by the Al Saud clan, in the Shia-populated Qatif region of the kingdom's Eastern Province.

[Aramco Says China Joint Venture to Develop Refinery and Petrochemical Complex](#)

March 10, 2022, Reuters

Saudi Aramco said its joint venture in China will develop a major integrated refinery and petrochemical complex in the northeast of the country.

[India Becomes Fifth Most Valued Stock Market, Thumping UK, Canada and Saudi Arabia](#)

March 11, 2022, Moneycontrol

India became the fifth most valued stock market beating the United Kingdom, Canada and Saudi Arabia. Currently, the US is the world's biggest market valued at \$47.32 trillion followed by China (\$11.52 trillion), Japan (\$6 trillion) and Hong Kong (\$5.55 trillion).

Syria

[President Zelensky Slams Russia for Deploying Syria Mercenaries to Ukraine: 'Murderers'](#)

March 11, 2022, The Times of Israel

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia was hiring "murderers" from Syria to fight in Ukraine after Moscow said fighters from the war-torn nation would be allowed to join its forces.

[Ukraine War: West Has 'Serious Concern' Putin Could Unleash Chemical Weapons on Kyiv](#)

March 09, 2022, Sky News (UK)

Western officials have warned of their "serious concern" that Vladimir Putin could order chemical weapons to be used on Ukraine's capital.

[ISIS Names Baghdadi's Brother as the New Caliph](#)

March 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Islamic State named its new leader 'Abu Al-Hassan Al-Hashemi al-Quraishi' in a recorded audio message distributed online.

[Syrian Al-Qaeda-linked Group Designated as 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist' by the US](#)

March 08, 2022, Middle East Monitor

'Katibat-Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad' group has been added to a sanctions list, requiring all UN member states to implement an assets freeze, a travel ban and an arms embargo against the group, the State Department said in a statement.

[UN official: Syria Says It's Ending Its Chemical Weapons, But This is 'Imprecise'](#)

March 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

A UN official said that the Syrian regime's announcement that it is ending its chemical weapons programme was "imprecise and incomplete", stressing that the Syrian regime continues its non-observance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Turkey

[Israel and Turkey Hail New Era in Relations, But Divisions Remain](#)

March 09, 2022, AL Jazeera

Israel and Turkey have announced a new era in relations following more than a decade of diplomatic rupture, as Israeli President Isaac Herzog made a landmark visit to the Turkish capital, Ankara.

[Readout of President Biden's Call with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey](#)

March 10, 2022, The White House

The two leaders discussed their shared concerns about Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. They reaffirmed their strong support for the government and people of Ukraine, underscored the need for an immediate cessation of Russian aggression, and welcomed the coordinated international response to the crisis.

['No Progress' as Top Russia, Ukraine Diplomats Talk in Turkey](#)

March 10, 2022, AL Jazeera

Ukraine's foreign minister said he discussed a 24-hour ceasefire with his Russian counterpart but no progress was made as Moscow's representative defended its invasion and said it was going as planned.

[Afghanistan, Qatar, US Hold Trilateral Meeting in Turkiye's Antalya](#)

March 11, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The US envoy called the meeting "a win-win situation" and discussed Washington's "future policy on Afghanistan," the statement said.

UAE

[United Arab Emirates to Nudge OPEC Allies to Increase Oil Production](#)

March 10, 2022, Financial Times

The United Arab Emirates will encourage fellow OPEC members to increase oil production as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has driven crude prices to their highest levels in more than a decade.

[UAE Denies its Ambassador's Statements Regarding Oil Production](#)

March 10, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The UAE denied the statements of its Ambassador in Washington, Yousef Al-Otaiba, in which he said that Abu Dhabi prefers an increase in oil production and will urge OPEC to consider raising production.

[You Still Need the Emirates, UAE Tells US as It Flexes Gulf Oil Muscles](#)

March 10, 2022, Middle East Monitor

By single-handedly knocking 13 per cent off rocketing oil prices in the past week, the United Arab Emirates demonstrated the power Gulf producers wield in the market and sent a wake-up call to Washington to pay closer attention to its long-time allies.

[Russians Looking to the UAE to Unload Billions in Crypto Assets: Report](#)

March 11, 2022, CoinDesk

Cryptocurrency firms based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been hit with a flood of requests by Russian clients to liquidate billions of dollars' worth of their digital assets.

Yemen

[Fighting Rages Outside Yemen's Marib as UN Envoy Meets Leaders](#)

March 13, 2022, Arab News

Heavy fighting has broken out between Yemeni government troops and the Iran-backed Houthis outside the central city of Marib during the past 24 hours, killing and wounding dozens of combatants.



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