



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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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

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, extended greetings to “Israeli friends” on the occasion of the country’s 74th Independence Day on May 5. As the two countries are celebrating the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, PM Modi expressed hope that “in the years to come bilateral relations will further deepen”. On his part, External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, underscored India-Israel relationship as “truly special” and stressed that “PM Modi’s visit to Tel Aviv in July 2017 was pivotal in shaping this partnership”. He also spoke about Israel’s role in the ‘Make in India’ initiative, knowledge partnerships, and the prospects of the West Asia Quad comprising India, Israel, US, and UAE in expanding economic cooperation in the region.

Continuing deepening India-Qatar partnership, Minister of State for External Affairs, V. Muraleedharan, met his Qatari counterpart in Doha. The two leaders held discussions on “energy, trade, investment, education, people-to-people contacts, and diaspora welfare”. Importantly, Minister Muraleedharan underscored that “Qatar’s investments in India have increased fivefold in the past two years”. Meanwhile, Oman’s non-oil export to India is up by 172 percent between 2020 and 2021. In a development highlighting growing bilateral partnership, UAE’s Minister of Economy will be leading a high-level business delegation to India this week to further promote trade and investments.

India’s defence ties with Saudi Arabia continue to improve further, with the two countries set to hold another set of naval exercises. Indian Navy’s INS Tir and INS Sujata along with Coast Guard ship Sarathi arrived at Jeddah port on May 5. Earlier in February, Saudi Royal Navy had participated in ‘Milan 2022’ multinational exercise that saw 40 countries train on India’s Eastern shore.

With regards to stalled Vienna talks on Iran nuclear deal, the European Union’s nuclear talk’s coordinator, Enrique Mora, is scheduled to visit Tehran on May 10. Meanwhile to find a “middle path”, the EU’s Foreign Policy Chief, Josep Borrell, suggested that “terror designation of IRGC could be lifted by the US, with restrictions remaining on Quds Force, IRGC’s overseas operations wing”. Amidst the Russia-Ukraine conflict and escalating global energy crisis, Borrell believes “Europeans will very much benefit from Iran nuclear deal as there would be another crude supplier in the international market”. Describing the EU’s efforts to revive the JCPOA as the “last bullet”, Borrell declared that “he would not be issuing

an ultimatum, but Iran file is on US President's table and his discussions with Secretary Blinken have reached the limit".

On the other hand, highlighting the growing opposition in Washington to the US return to JCPOA, Senate passed a non-binding motion demanding any agreement with Tehran also addresses Iran's ballistic missile program and support for proxies, while calling upon the Biden administration not to lift sanctions on IRGC.

Even as crude prices hover around USD 110/barrel, OPEC+ has stuck to its modest rise in oil production for June by 432,000 barrels per day. OPEC continued to maintain that it cannot be blamed for Russian supply disruptions, adding that "China's COVID-19 lockdowns threaten the demand outlook".

In the backdrop of strained US-Saudi Arabia relations, CIA Director, William Burns, reportedly held a secret meeting with Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman. The meeting took place in Mid-April in Jeddah and the two leaders had a "good conversation" in a "better tone than in prior US government engagements". Meanwhile, open-source intelligence reports point toward Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) committing USD 2 billion to Jared Kushner's equity fund, effectively allowing Saudi investments in Israeli firms for the first time.

In an important regional development, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad visited Tehran and met Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Iranian leader noted that "after a decade of war, Syrian President and the nation is now honoured by all regional countries". Commenting on the normalisation of relations between Israel and Gulf countries, Khamenei stressed that "some of our neighbours have relations with the Zionist regime, however people of these countries come on streets on Quds [Jerusalem] day and chant anti-Zionist slogans, this is the current reality of the region".

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

Bahrain

[New CENTCOM Commander Visits U.S. Navy Unmanned Systems Hub in Bahrain](#)

May 02, 2022, US Central Command

The new commander of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Gen. Michael Kurilla, visited U.S. 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain to see first-hand how the Navy is integrating unmanned systems and artificial intelligence into fleet operations in the Middle East.

[Bahrain Grants Licence to SpaceX to Offer Starlink Internet Services](#)

April 27, 2022, Reuters

Bahrain's Telecommunications Regulatory authority said it had granted a licence to Elon Musk's rocket company SpaceX to offer Starlink satellite and internet services in the country.

Egypt

[Attack on Sinai Checkpoint Kills 11 Egyptian Troops, Says Army](#)

May 07, 2022, Arab News

Egypt's military said at least 11 troops, including an officer, have been killed in a militant attack in the restive northern part of the Sinai Peninsula.

[Arab States Condemn Attack in Egypt](#)

May 08, 2022, Arab News

Arab states condemned a militant attack in Egypt's restive northern part of the Sinai Peninsula that killed at least 11 troops.

[US Condemns Sinai Terrorist Attack, Affirms Partnership with Egypt in Confronting Terrorism](#)

May 08, 2022, Ahram Online

The US condemns the terrorist attack that targeted members of the Egyptian military in Sinai, according to a statement by the Department of State.

Iraq

[Iraq Signs Contracts with U.S and France to Import Advanced Weapons](#)

May 08, 2022, Reuters

Iraq's Ministry of Defence signed contracts with the United States and France to import advanced weapons and strengthen artillery.

[Sinjar Becomes Latest Flashpoint for Iran-Turkey Tensions in Iraq](#)

May 06, 2022, AL Monitor

New Pentagon report says that the Turkey-PKK conflict and Iranian militias are contributing to instability in Iraq.

[US Urges Iraqi Government Formation as Stalemate Drags on](#)

April 22, 2022, AL-Monitor

The Biden administration called for Iraqi leaders to swiftly end the political stalemate that has paralyzed the government for the past six months and hindered Iraq's economic recovery.

Iran

[Concern Rises over an Iran-Backed Attack on Israeli Embassy in India](#)

May 07, 2022, Iran International

Security measures are tight around the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi reportedly over a serious possibility of an attack by Iran-backed elements.

[Ayatollah Khamenei: Syria Now Looked Upon as A Power Despite Devastation of War](#)

May 08, 2022, Press TV

In a meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said despite the devastation done to Syria by years-long war, the country is now looked upon as a major power.

[US Senate Passes Non-Binding Motion Against Return to Original Iran Nuclear Deal](#)

May 05, 2022, The Times of Israel

The US Senate passed a non-binding motion demanding that any nuclear agreement reached with Iran also addresses the Islamic Republic's ballistic missile program and support for proxies in the region.

[EU Suggests IRGC Terror Delisting Compromise in Attempt to Save Iran Nuclear Talks](#)

May 07, 2022, The Times of Israel

The European Union is making a last-ditch attempt to kickstart stalled nuclear talks between P5+1 and Iran, which have reached an impasse over Iran's demand that Washington removes the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from the US terror list.

[Iran Says EU Nuclear Talks Envoy to Visit Tehran Seeking to Save the Deal](#)

May 07, 2022, Reuters

The European Union's Iran nuclear talks coordinator, Enrique Mora, is to visit Tehran on Tuesday (May 10) as the EU seeks to break the deadlock and save the 2015 accord.

Israel

[In Video Message to Israeli People on Their 74th Independence Day, PM Modi Speaks of Deepening Ties](#)

May 05, 2022, Hindustan Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday (May 5) expressed the hope that the India-Israel relationship will be deepened further in future as he greeted the Israeli people on the occasion of their 74th Independence Day.

[External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar Says PM Modi's 2017 Israel Visit was 'Goosebump Moment' for Him](#)

May 06, 2022, The Times of India

Calling the relationship between India and Israel "truly special", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in 2017 was a "goosebump moment" for him.

[Indian Agriculture Minister, Narendra Tomar, To Visit Israel This Week](#)

May 07, 2022, The Economic Times

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar will visit Israel during May 8-11 for bilateral meetings between the countries and discuss various issues related to the farm sector.

[Palestinian Terrorists Arrested for Deadly Elad Axe Attack, After 60-Hour Manhunt](#)

May 08, 2022, The Times of Israel

A joint statement from the Israel Defence Forces, Shin Bet and Israel Police announced the arrests of As'ad Yousef As'ad al-Rifa'i, 19, and Subhi Emad Sbeihat, 20, who allegedly killed three people and severely wounded several others in the ultra-Orthodox city Elad.

[Kremlin Declines to Say Whether President Vladimir Putin Apologised to Israel over Hitler Remarks](#)

May 06, 2022, AL Arabiya

The Kremlin declined to say whether President Vladimir Putin had apologised to Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, following an assertion from Russia's foreign minister that Adolf Hitler had Jewish origins.

[Russia, Israel Tensions Will Continue to Mount: Russian Experts](#)

May 06, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

After Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made statements about “Hitler’s Jewish blood” and blamed the Jews for being “the worst antisemites,” the verbal and written exchange between Israel and Russia has quickly escalated.

[US House Passes Stop Iranian Drones Act](#)

April 29, 2022, Asharq Al-Awsat

The US House of Representatives unanimously passed the Stop Iranian Drones Act (SIDA) to end its drone program and impose sanctions on its supporters. The bill was approved by 424 votes against two and required approval from the Senate and a presidential signature to become law.

[US Slams Slated Israeli Settlement Approvals: ‘Deeply Damages Prospect for 2 State Solution’](#)

May 07, 2022, The Times of Israel

The Biden administration blasted Israeli plans to advance nearly 4,000 settlement homes in the West Bank, saying the measure “deeply damages the prospects for a two-state solution.”

Jordan

[Jordan Warns Israel against Eviction of Palestinians in Hebron](#)

May 07, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Jordanian authorities issued warning against Israeli plans to evict 1,300 Palestinians living in eight villages in the South Hebron Hills, a statement reported by the official Petra news agency said.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Oil Minister Says OPEC+ Strategy Ensures Market Stability, Balance](#)

May 07, 2022, Zawya (Refinitiv)

The Kuwaiti oil minister said that the OPEC+ strategy of monthly crude production increases ensures market stability and balance, the state news agency KUNA reported.

Lebanon

[Lebanese Abroad Cast Votes for May 15 Election Hoping for Change](#)

May 08, 2022, Reuters

Lebanese citizens living abroad began voting in a parliamentary election, with many set to back political newcomers after the worst crisis since Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war that led to widespread poverty and a wave of emigration.

Oman

[Oman's Non-Oil Exports to India Up 172 Percent, Says Commerce Minister Qais Al Yousef Ahead of Visit](#)

May 08, 2022, The Times of Oman

Speaking ahead of the 10th India-Oman Joint Commission meeting, Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said, non-oil exports from Oman to India increased by an impressive 172 percent between 2020 and 2021.

Qatar

[MoS External Affairs Muraleedharan, Qatar Counterpart Hold Discussions on Development in Doha](#)

May 09, 2022, The Economic Times

"Delighted to meet Qatar's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E Mr Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi in Doha. Had a productive discussion on Energy, Trade, Investment, Education, P2P contacts and diaspora welfare. Confident that the partnership will continue to clock newer heights," tweeted the Union Minister.

['Qatar's Investments in India Increase Fivefold in Two Years'](#)

May 09, 2022, The Peninsula Qatar

Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs of India, V Muraleedharan said Qatar's investments in India have increased fivefold over the past two years.

[Qatar's Emir to Visit Iran and Europe in Attempt to Save Nuclear Deal](#)

May 08, 2022, Doha News

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will visit Iran, Germany, the United Kingdom, and other European countries this week on a trip that will likely be focussed around efforts to restore Iran's 2015 nuclear deal as well as energy security in Europe.

Saudi Arabia

[OPEC+ Sticks to Modest Oil Output Hike despite Price Rally](#)

May 05, 2022, Moneycontrol

OPEC+ agreed to another modest monthly oil output increase, arguing that the producer group could not be blamed for disruptions to Russian supply and saying China's coronavirus lockdowns threatened the outlook for demand.

[Saudi, Indian Naval Exercise Heralds New Era in Ties](#)

May 07, 2022, Arab News

Vessels from the First Training Squadron of the Indian Navy – INS Tir and INS Sujata along with Indian Coast Guard ship Sarathi – arrived at Jeddah port for a training exchange with the Royal Saudi Navy.

[Saudis Cut Oil Prices from Record Highs Amid Covid-19 Lockdowns in China](#)

May 08, 2022, Business Standard

Saudi Arabia cut oil prices for buyers in Asia as coronavirus lockdowns in China weigh on demand, countering uncertainty around Russia's supplies as the Ukraine war drags on.

[Report: Saudi Arabia to Invest in Israel Through Jared Kushner's Equity Fund](#)

May 08, 2022, Israel Hayom

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) is said to commit \$2 billion to Affinity Partners, effectively allowing, for the first time, investment in Israeli firms. Riyadh and Tel Aviv do not maintain formal diplomatic relations. The move is seen as yet another public expression of the warming ties between the two.

[CIA Chief Burns Met With Saudi Crown Prince on a Secret Trip to Jeddah, Report Says](#)

May 03, 2022, Middle East Eye

CIA Director William Burns met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman last month during an unannounced trip to Saudi Arabia as the Biden administration looks to repair ties with its Gulf ally.

Syria

[Russia Said to Pull Troops from Syria to Bolster Forces in Ukraine](#)

May 08, 2022, The Times of Israel

Russia has begun the process of withdrawing some of its troops in Syria to help bolster its forces in Ukraine.

[US Defence Official Confirms Russia is Using Syrian, Libyan Fighters in Ukraine](#)

May 08, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Russia has been using mercenaries from Libya and Syria in its military campaign in Ukraine, US Defence Department documents have shown earlier this week.

[Turkey Plans to Send 1 Million Syrians Home, Answering Public Unease](#)

May 07, 2022, Xinhua

Turkey is making plans for a massive return of Syrians to their homeland as public hostility to their presence in the country is escalating.

[Syria's Ruling Assad Family is Likely Worth \\$1b-\\$2b: US Report](#)

April 28, 2022, Daily Sabah

According to the U.S. State Department, the Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad's family is likely worth \$1 billion-\$2 billion, despite U.S.-led efforts to isolate him over the brutal war.

Turkey

[Turkish Inflation Jumps From 20 Percent To 70 Percent in Just Six Months](#)

May 05, 2022, AL Monitor

Turkish consumer prices rose 7.25 percent in April and annual inflation hit 69.97 percent, more than tripling in just six months – a price explosion with few precedents in the recent history of the country.

[US Congress Signals Openness to Turkey F-16 Sale Amid Ukraine Cooperation](#)

May 05, 2022, Defence News

Turkey's support for Ukraine, most notably via the export of armed drones and diplomacy with Russia, has presented Ankara with an opportunity to bolster its tarnished image in the US Congress.

[Human Rights Breaches in Turkey, Cambodia and China](#)

May 05, 2022, European Parliament

The European Parliament adopted three resolutions with respect to human rights in Turkey, Cambodia and China.

['Some NATO Allies Want Longer War for Weaker Russia': FM Çavuşoğlu](#)

April 21, 2022, Daily Sabah

Some NATO member states want the war in Ukraine to continue in order to weaken Russia, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said.

UAE

[UAE Minister of Economy to Lead High-Level Business Delegation to India This Week](#)

May 08, 2022, The Economic Times

UAE Minister of Economy, Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, will be leading a high-level business delegation to India this week to discuss ways to further promote trade and investments between the two countries.

[Israel Memorial Day Ceremony Held in Abu Dhabi, in First for Any Arab Country](#)

May 04, 2022, The Times of Israel

Amir Hayek, Israel's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, led a ceremony to commemorate Israel's Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and victims of terror in Abu Dhabi, first such event in any Arab country.

Yemen

[UN Leads £65m Plan to Stop Huge Oil Spill Off Yemen During First Ceasefire in Six Years](#)

May 08, 2022, The Guardian

The UN is to stage a rare donor conference in a bid to raise the \$80m (£65m) necessary to prevent an ageing oil tanker off the west coast of Yemen exploding and causing an environmental disaster potentially four times worse than the Exxon Valdez spill near Alaska in 1989.



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