



# 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 Volume IV, Issue 21

### 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

Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, spoke with his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian “reaffirming the importance both countries attach to advancing bilateral relations”. In another development, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in a statement over the delimitation of assembly constituencies in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, accused India of altering the demographic structure of J&K and violating the rights of the Kashmiris. India slammed the OIC for its unwarranted interference, asking it to refrain from carrying out a “communal agenda” at the behest of a particular country.

Amidst the decision to curtail wheat exports, New Delhi has assured its key strategic partners in West Asia, UAE and Saudi Arabia, of sufficient supplies of food staples to meet their requirements. Further, India has reportedly shipped 61,500 tonnes of wheat to Egypt, and has received requests from 12 more countries for the same. In a sign of possible expansion of ‘BRICS’, nine developing countries including Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Thailand participated in the ‘BRICS Plus’ virtual meeting.

In a high-profile targeted killing, Col. Hassan Sayyad Khodayari – a senior officer in IRGC Quds Force was assassinated outside his home in Tehran on May 22. Without naming the United States and Israel, Iran blamed “global arrogance” for the killing. Open-source intelligence reports mentioned Col. Khodayari planning worldwide attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets. Meanwhile, after meeting US Defence officials in Washington, Israeli Defence Minister, Benny Gantz asserted that the US remains hopeful of a deal with Iran, but is “unwilling to delist the IRGC from Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) list”. On the other hand, Iran rejected misleading reports that “Iranian leadership told Qatar’s Emir that Tehran was ready for compromise in nuclear talks”. Iranian Foreign Ministry clarified that it will not compromise on its demands to revive the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA).

To rebuild stressed US-Saudi Arabia relations, the two sides are discussing the possibility of a meeting between President Biden and Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, during Biden’s forthcoming visit to the Middle East next month. Despite unprecedented western sanctions on Russia, Saudi Arabia is set to continue its partnership with Moscow as part OPEC+ alliance. On the expectation that a new OPEC+ agreement on crude production could be brokered soon, Saudi

Energy Minister, Prince Abdulaziz stressed that “given the uncertainties in the market, he cannot predict what the new agreement might look like but insisted that the group would increase production depending on the demand”. Even as crude prices hover around USD 110/barrel, in a much-needed relief to consumers, India cut central excise duty on Petrol and Diesel reducing Petrol prices by INR 9.5/litre and Diesel by INR 7/litre.

As noted in an earlier issue of West Asia Review, Turkey has opposed Finland and Sweden’s admission to NATO. Turkish President Erdogan warned that “Ankara cannot accept countries that host terrorist organisations like PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and YPG (ekîneyên Parastina Gel in Syria)”. In another important regional development, Russia is said to have targeted Israeli fighter jets with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles in Northwestern Syria without presenting any serious threat to Israeli aircraft.

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

## Bahrain

### [US Ambassador Praises Growing Ties with Bahrain](#)

May 22, 2022, Gulf News Daily

US Ambassador Steven Bondy has stressed America's close relations with Bahrain as among the oldest and closest in the region.

## Egypt

### [India Ships Wheat to Egypt Post Ban, Gets Diplomatic Requests From 12 Nations](#)

May 19, 2022, Hindustan Times

India has shipped 61,500 tonnes of wheat to Egypt, clearing its largest overseas consignment after the country imposed a ban on the staple export. At least a dozen countries have sent diplomatic requests for more shipments.

### [Russia-Ukraine War: 'Millions' Could Die Globally from Wheat Shortage, Egypt Warns](#)

May 22, 2022, Middle East Eye

Increases in food prices triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine could kill "millions" of people globally, Egypt's finance minister has cautioned, echoing warnings made by the UN and G7 countries over the worldwide wheat shortage.

### [Biden Administration Approves Large Sale of Anti-Tank Missiles to Egypt](#)

May 20, 2022, Middle East Eye

The Biden administration informed Congress that it has approved a potential sale of \$691m worth of anti-tank missiles and other equipment to Egypt.

### [Israel Negotiating Gas Exports to Europe](#)

May 22, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Israel and the European Union have been in negotiations for the past month to export gas to Europe via Egypt, Energy Ministry Director-General Lior Schillat said.

### [US Army Veterans Say They Saw UFOs on Israel-Egypt Border in Sinai in 2014](#)

May 18, 2022, The Times of Israel

Three former US Army cavalymen have spoken up about seeing UFOs along the Israel-Egypt border in the Sinai Peninsula in 2014. The eight bright objects that they spotted flying over the peninsula were not man-made.

## Iraq

### ['I Mean Ukraine': Former U.S. President George Bush Calls Iraq Invasion 'Unjustified'](#)

May 19, 2022, Reuters

Former U.S. President George W. Bush mistakenly described the invasion of Iraq as "brutal" and "unjustified" before correcting himself to say he meant to refer to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### [Iraq Balks at Greater Chinese Control of Its Oilfields](#)

May 17, 2022, Reuters

Iraq's oil ministry thwarted three prospective deals last year that would have handed Chinese firms more control over its oilfields and led to an exodus of international oil majors that Baghdad wants to invest in its creaking economy.

### [Iraq's Oil Ministry Aims to Establish New Oil Company in Kurdistan Region](#)

May 21, 2022, AL Arabiya

Iraq's federal government aims to establish a new oil company in the Kurdistan region, the oil ministry said in a statement.



## Iran

### [Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar Speaks to Iranian Foreign Minister Abdollahian to Reinvigorate Oil, Trade Transit Ties](#)

May 20, 2022, The Tribune

Indian External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, spoke to his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian to develop and promote cooperation and relations in various fields. The conversation comes in the wake of Iranian media reports that India is preparing its refineries for Iranian imports.

### [Iran: Revolutionary Guard Officer \(IRGC\) Assassinated in Tehran](#)

May 22, 2022, AL Jazeera

Hassan Sayyad Khodayari was a colonel in the Quds Force, the Guard's foreign arm, with accusations levelled at Israeli and American intelligence.

### [Slain Iranian Officer Said to Have Planned Attacks Against Israelis, Jews Worldwide](#)

May 22, 2022, The Times of Israel

A senior member of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) who was killed in Tehran had planned kidnappings and other attempts to attack Israeli and Jewish targets worldwide.

### [Iran Rejects 'Compromise' in Vienna Talks to Bring US to Compliance](#)

May 23, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

Iran's Foreign Ministry has unequivocally ruled out any prospect of "compromise" in Vienna talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal which is on life support since the US withdrawal in 2018.

### [IAEA Chief: No Indication of Iran's Lack of Seriousness in Vienna Talks](#)

May 20, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

The head of the UN atomic watchdog says he has found no sign of Iran's lack of seriousness in the talks with the P4+1 group of countries to revive the multilateral 2015 deal, only days after Washington said Tehran needs to demonstrate its seriousness.

[More Russian Oil Going East Squeezes Iranian Crude Sales to China](#)

May 19, 2022, AL Jazeera

Iran's crude exports to China have fallen sharply since the start of the Ukraine war as Beijing favoured heavily discounted Russian barrels, leaving almost 40 million barrels of Iranian oil stored on tankers at sea in Asia and seeking buyers.

## Israel

### [Report: In 1st, US Refuelers To Take Part in Major Israeli Drill for Strike on Iran](#)

May 17, 2022, The Times of Israel

The United States will participate in Israel's large-scale drill simulating a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities as part of the broader Chariots of Fire exercise later this month.

### [Israeli Defence Minister Gantz Says US Holding Firm Against Iran's Demand To Remove IRGC From Terror List](#)

May 23, 2022, The Times of Israel

Following meetings with top American defence officials, Defence Minister Benny Gantz said that the US remains hopeful for a deal with Iran, but is standing firm against Iran's demand to delist the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terror organization.

### [PM Bennett Vows 'We Won't Give Up,' After Losing Knesset Majority](#)

May 22, 2022, The Times of Israel

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett vowed to persevere after a lawmaker's resignation from the coalition left the government with a minority in the Knesset and fighting for survival.

### [Hamas Hails Malaysia, Venezuela for Supporting Palestine](#)

May 21, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Ezzet Al-Resheq, member of the Hamas Political Bureau, praised remarks delivered by Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob as he asked the US administration to be "transparent" and "honest" when handling Palestinian rights and their struggle with the Israeli occupation.

## Jordan

### [Jordan: Israeli Court's Support for Jewish Prayer at Temple Mount Breaches International Law](#)

May 23, 2022, The Times of Israel

Jordan panned an Israeli court's dramatic ruling in favour of three Jewish teenagers who bowed down and recited the "Shema Yisrael" prayer at Jerusalem's Temple Mount, warning that it flew in the face of international law.

### [Jordan, Germany to Host Middle East and North Africa-Europe Future Energy Dialogue in June](#)

May 21, 2022, The Jordan Times

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Saleh Kharabsheh and German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck announced intensifying cooperation between the two governments in the field of energy policy under the Jordanian-German energy partnership programme.

## Kuwait

[IIT-JEE To Go Global and Be Open to Students From 25 Nations, From West Asia to US to Vietnam](#)

May 22, 2022, The Economic Times

IIT-JEE (IIT-Joint Entrance Exam) is set to go global with the Indian government planning to hold the exam in 25 countries, right from the US to Vietnam, simultaneously.

## Lebanon

### [Hezbollah's Coalition Loses Parliamentary Majority in Lebanon's First Vote After Uprising, Financial Collapse](#)

May 17, 2022, CNN

The Iran-backed political and militant group Hezbollah has lost its parliamentary coalition majority in a Lebanese election that delivered significant gains to its rivals as well as to a protest movement that swept the country in a 2019 uprising.

## Oman

### [Oman's Wheat Stockpile Sufficient: Minister of Commerce](#)

May 20, 2022, The Times of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, affirmed the availability of sufficient stocks of wheat and has taken all necessary measures to secure its availability during the coming period.

### [Iran To Revive Gas Pipeline Project to Oman](#)

May 22, 2022, Reuters

Iran's oil minister has agreed to revive a long-stalled project to lay an undersea pipeline to carry gas to Oman, the Iranian state news agency IRNA reported.

## Qatar

### [Any Potential Recession Will Be 'Light,' Qatar Investment Authority CEO Says](#)

May 22, 2022, CNBC

The CEO of Qatar's sovereign wealth fund believes that if the world sees a recession, it will be "light." Rising fears of a looming recession has pushed U.S. stocks briefly into a bear market.

### [Qatar Ready to Mediate Between Iran, EU, US](#)

May 21, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, announced that his country is ready to mediate between Iran, the European Union and the US regarding the nuclear deal.

### [Qatar, Germany Sign Energy Deal](#)

May 21, 2022, Middle East Monitor

"The energy partnership will help Germany diversify its gas supplies by importing liquefied natural gas from Qatar, and at the same time will give a push towards cooperation in the field of green hydrogen," the statement added.

### [Israel Seeks Direct Flights with Qatar for FIFA World Cup Scheduled in November 2022](#)

May 23, 2022, Business Standard

Israel is approaching Qatar for direct flights between the two countries during the FIFA World Cup slated for later this year in Qatar.



## Saudi Arabia

### [India Hits Out at OIC For 'Unwarranted' Comments on Delimitation in Jammu-Kashmir](#)

May 17, 2022, India Today

India hit out at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for its "unwarranted comments" on the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir and asserted that the union territory is an integral and inalienable part of India.

### [Saudi Citizens Banned from Travelling to India, 15 Other Nations Amid Covid Surge](#)

May 23, 2022, India Today

Saudi Arabia has banned its citizens from travelling to India and 15 other countries, citing a surge in Covid-19 cases there in recent weeks.

### [US Committed To 'Strong Partnership' with Saudi Arabia, Defence Secretary Austin Says](#)

May 20, 2022, Saudi Gazette

"I share Saudi concerns over Iran's destabilising activities in the region and welcome the Kingdom's constructive efforts in advancing the current Yemen truce, which should be extended", Secretary Austin said.

### [US, Saudi Officials Reportedly Discussing President Biden Meeting with Crown Prince](#)

May 20, 2022, The Times of Israel

US and Saudi officials have reportedly been in talks about arranging a meeting between President Joe Biden and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman when the former is slated to travel to the Middle East next month.

### [Saudi Arabia Set to Support Russia's Role in OPEC+ Despite Looming Sanctions](#)

May 22, 2022, Middle East Eye

Saudi Arabia plans to continue its OPEC+ partnership with Russia despite western pressure on Moscow and a potential EU ban on Russian oil imports.

### [China Calls for Expansion of Five-nation BRICS](#)

May 20, 2022, The Tribune

The five-country BRICS could have more members if a suggestion made by China finds favours with the other four members – India, Russia, South Africa and Brazil.

BRICS began life as a four-country club and expanded to its current form in 2010 with the induction of South Africa.

## Syria

### [In first, Russian Military Said to Fire S-300 Missiles at Israeli Jets Over Syria](#)

May 17, 2022, The Times of Israel

Russian forces opened fire on Israeli jets with advanced S-300 anti-aircraft missiles at the end of an alleged IAF attack on targets in northwestern Syria last week.

### [Iran Filling Vacuum Left by Russians in Syria, Says Jordan's King](#)

May 21, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

King Abdullah II of Jordan said Iran and its proxies were filling a vacuum left by Russia in southern Syria, warning that this could lead to issues along Jordan's borders.

## Turkey

### [Turkey Firm on Its Stance on Finland, Sweden NATO Membership Bid: President Erdoğan](#)

May 19, 2022, Daily Sabah

Turkey will continue to oppose NATO membership of Finland and Sweden, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said after Ankara has several times voiced that it expects security guarantees.

### [Finland Ready To 'Guarantee' Türkiye Close Monitoring of PKK Terror Group](#)

May 23, 2022, TRT World

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto has said his country can assure Türkiye the PKK terror group's connections in the country are monitored more closely, state media reported.

### [UK Lifts All Restrictions on Defence Exports to Turkey](#)

May 20, 2022, Middle East Eye

The United Kingdom has completely lifted all of the restrictions on the export of defence products to Turkey that were brought in following Ankara's 2019 offensive on northeast Syria, Turkey's chief defence industry officer Ismail Demir said.

## UAE

### [UAE, Saudi Arabia Will Still Get Wheat from India Despite Export Ban - and Foodstuff Retailers Are Relieved](#)

May 20, 2022, Gulf News

UAE and Saudi Arabia – have been assured of sufficient wheat exports from India despite the ban the latter had placed on all shipments of the food staple, thus offering much relief to consumers and retailers in the two Gulf countries.

### [UAE-India Relationship to Reach Inflection Point in 2022, Says Consul-General Dr. Puri](#)

May 21, 2022, Khaleej Times

The India-UAE relationship has been on swing for a few years and 2022 will be the inflection point, said Dr. Aman Puri, the Consul-General of India in Dubai. Dr. Puri was speaking at the India Real Estate Show 2022 in Dubai.

### [Dubai Has Succeeded in Its Covid-19 Strategy Where Hong Kong and Shanghai Have Failed](#)

May 22, 2022, South China Morning Post

By becoming an early adopter of vaccines, keeping borders open, and facilitating technological innovation, the UAE has seen swift economic recovery, while China has struggled.

## Yemen

### [Houthi Top Official Says Group Not Against Extending Truce in Yemen](#)

May 22, 2022, AL Arabiya

The head of Yemen's Houthi Supreme Political Council, Mahdi al-Mashat, said the group was not against extending a UN-brokered truce, despite describing it as “not encouraging enough”.



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