



# 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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### ABOUT US

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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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

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## Abstract

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organisation' (SCO) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on September 16. PM Modi emphasised the "constructive role that SCO can play in the post-COVID era, particularly in furthering economic recovery and strengthening supply chains". He also stressed the importance of tackling the challenge of food security and highlighted India's efforts to popularise millet. On the sidelines of the SCO Summit, PM Modi met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, and Russian President Vladimir Putin reviewing cooperation in areas such as trade, energy, connectivity, and defence. India's civilisational heritage - the city of 'Varanasi' has been nominated as the first-ever SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2022-2023.

Underscoring SCO's growing appeal in the Middle East, Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have been granted the status of dialogue partners. Chinese state media pointed towards NATO member Turkey also eyeing SCO membership as part of its Look East policy.

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh began his visit to Egypt on September 18 where he will meet Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Defence Minister Gen. Mohamed Zaki. The visit aims to "further consolidate defence cooperation" and "the special friendship" between New Delhi and Cairo. It is to be noted that, Egypt has shown interest in acquiring India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) "Tejas", while, New Delhi has offered to partially set up a production facility in Egypt to produce the LCA.

India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met his Saudi counterpart to discuss ways to attract greater investments and diversify bilateral trade boosting economic ties between the two countries. In another development, as part of its G20 Presidency for 2023, India has invited UAE, Oman, Egypt, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, and Spain as guest countries.

Highlighting Iran's growing proximity with China and Russia, Tehran has signed a Memorandum of Obligations to become a permanent member of the SCO. In light of this, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian asserted that "Iran has entered a new stage of economic, commercial, transit and energy cooperation". Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Iran on its upcoming full membership of the SCO while adding that Beijing views its relations with

Tehran from a “long-term strategic perspective”. Amidst this, reports point toward Russia using Iranian Drones (Shahed-136 delta-wing drones) rebranded as Geranium 2 in Ukraine’s Kharkiv region.

On US-Iran relations, EU’s Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell stressed that the JCPOA talks are once again in “stalemate”, while Israeli Defence Minister Gantz believes nuclear talks are “in the ER room” (emergency room) and the agreement is unlikely to be revived anytime soon.

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

## Bahrain

### [Abraham Accords Have Led to Greater Regional Cooperation, Expanding Opportunities for India](#)

September 16, 2022, The Indian Express

As the region marks the 2nd anniversary of the Abraham Accords, new joint ventures among the US, Bahrain, Israel, UAE and India are being undertaken in critical sectors such as clean energy, health, innovation, technology, agriculture, water, trade, tourism, sustainability and much more.

### [Middle East Nations Must Strengthen Defence against Iran, Bahraini Ambassador Says](#)

September 18, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Like-minded Middle Eastern countries need to work together to defend their national security interests from Iran, Bahrain's Ambassador to the US said at The Jerusalem Post Annual Conference in New York.

## Egypt

### [India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Begins Three-day Visit to Egypt, Potential Tejas Deal on Focus](#)

September 18, 2022, The New Indian Express

India and Egypt will ink an agreement to expand defence and security cooperation during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's three-day visit to the Arab country beginning Sunday (September 18).

### [Egypt Becomes Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Dialogue Partner](#)

September 15, 2022, Arab News

Egypt has signed a memorandum of understanding for its accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a dialogue partner.

### [US Seizes on PM Modi's SCO Remarks to Claim India 'distancing' from Russia](#)

September 17, 2022, The Tribune

U.S. leaders and the media seized on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's opening remarks at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin to claim that concerns expressed by India as well as China in an earlier meeting had increased the pressure on the Kremlin to end its aggression in Ukraine.

### [India's Ancient City of Varanasi Nominated as the First-ever SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital at the 2022 SCO Summit](#)

September 16, 2022, Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India

The city of 'Varanasi' has been nominated as the first-ever SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital during the period 2022-2023 at the 22nd Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of State in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on September 16, 2022.

### [The U.S. to Withhold \\$130 mn of Military Aid to Egypt Over Human Rights - Official](#)

September 14, 2022, Reuters

The Biden administration has decided to withhold \$130 million of foreign military aid to Egypt over its failure to fulfil human rights conditions, U.S. officials said but allowed some funds to go through due to its determination that Cairo has made progress on political detentions.

## Iraq

### [Saudi Arabia Becomes India's Second-Biggest Oil Supplier, Topples Russia; Iraq Retains Top Spot](#)

September 15, 2022, News 18

Saudi Arabia emerged as the second-biggest oil supplier to India after a three-month gap, overtaking Russia by a thin margin, while Iraq retained the top spot in August 2022, data from industry and trade sources showed.

### [Fears of Economic Slowdown Cap Crude Prices to Around USD 83 Per Barrel](#)

September 18, 2022, Oilprice.com

The oil market is currently very much focused on the bearish signals, with prices reflecting fears of a slowdown in China, a slowdown or recession in the U.S., and a recession in Europe.



## Iran

### [Chabahar-Central Asia Transit Route to Boost India-Iran Cooperation: President Raisi](#)

September 18, 2022, Business Standard

Terming the relations between India and Iran as "friendly and cordial", Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said the Chabahar-Central Asia transit route can help both nations strengthen the grounds for cooperation.

### [China Congratulates Iran on Upcoming SCO Full Membership: President Xi Jinping](#)

September 16, 2022, China Daily

Noting Iran is welcome to join the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI), President Xi said China congratulates Iran on becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and stands ready for closer coordination and cooperation with Iran within the SCO framework.

### [SCO is an Anti-Evil Axis](#)

September 18, 2022, Tehran Times

Iranian President's participation in SCO Summit was the latest indication that a new axis is now taking shape on the world stage.

### [Iran Inches One Step Closer to Russia and China as Nuclear Talks Falter](#)

September 16, 2022, CNN

Iran is set to formalize its relationship with the Global East, inching one step closer to joining the Sino-Russian axis as its nuclear talks with global powers falter.

### [Russia's Use of Iranian Kamikaze Drones Creates New Dangers for Ukrainian Troops](#)

September 17, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Russia has inflicted serious damage on Ukrainian forces with recently introduced Iranian drones, in its first wide-scale deployment of a foreign weapons system since the war began, Ukrainian commanders say.

[Iran Nuclear Talks in 'Stalemate': Borrell](#)

September 14, 2022, AL Arabiya

Negotiations to bring Iran and the US back into the nuclear deal curbing Tehran's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting sanctions are in "stalemate", EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

[Israel's Defence Minister: Iran Nuclear Deal 'in ER Room'](#)

September 15, 2022, Arab News

Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers is "in the ER room" and is unlikely to be renewed soon if at all, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said.

[Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Emerges in Public Amid Health Speculation](#)

September 17, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Iranian media published photographs and video of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei attending a religious ceremony in Tehran, amid speculation about the octogenarian's health among foreign diplomats.

## Israel

### [Indian Firms to Weaponise Israeli Drones Under IAF Project Cheetah](#)

September 19, 2022, India Today

Indian Air Force (IAF) is all set to introduce Project Cheetah which will help weaponise Israeli drones in all defence wings via Indian manufacturing units.

### [UAE's FM Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Meets Prime Minister of Israel Yair Lapid](#)

September 15, 2022, Khaleej Times

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Yair Lapid, have explored the avenues of enhancing the UAE-Israel relations as part of the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement, signed in 2020.

### [US Envoy to UN Vows to 'continue pressure' on Iran Ahead of General Assembly](#)

September 16, 2022, The Times of Israel

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that the US will "continue to pressure" Iran over the nuclear inspections that have stalled negotiations ahead of the UN General Assembly.

### [Iran Hackers 'access database' with Records of 9.5m Israelis](#)

September 14, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Israeli media reported that an Iranian group of hackers said that they had seized the data of millions of Israelis, including Prime Minister Yair Lapid and opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, and taken down the website of the Israeli broadcaster Kan.

## Jordan

### [Israeli PM Lapid Said Hoping to Meet with Jordan's Abdullah on UN Sidelines](#)

September 18, 2022, The Times of Israel

Prime Minister Yair Lapid is seeking to hold a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II on Tuesday (September 20), on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

### [Jordan-US Deal to Support Amman's 'Economic Reform Program': Foreign Minister](#)

September 18, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Jordanian FM Ayman Safadi said the fourth US-Jordan Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Partnership (MoU) signed in Washington "will contribute to supporting the economic reform program," according to Jordan's official news agency Petra.

## Kuwait

### [Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Set to Leave for Japan](#)

September 15, 2022, Arab Times

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Japan, according to a press release issued by the External Affairs Ministry of India on September 12, 2022.

## Lebanon

### [IMF to Send Mission to Lebanon Next Week to Discuss Slow Reform Progress](#)

September 15, 2022, Reuters

The International Monetary Fund said that a staff mission will visit Lebanon next week to discuss ways to "speed up" implementation of agreed reforms required for an IMF loan program amid deteriorating living conditions in the country.

## Oman

### [India Invites Oman as Guest to G-20 Meet](#)

September 17, 2022, Muscat Daily

As part of its presidency of the G-20, India has extended a special invitation to Oman to participate in the G-20 Summit and meetings as a guest country. Other countries invited as guests include Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, Spain and the UAE.

## Qatar

### [Relations Between US, Qatar Stronger Than Before, Says US Chamber of Commerce Vice President](#)

September 15, 2022, The Peninsula Qatar

Senior Vice President of Middle East and Turkey at the US Chamber of Commerce Khush Choksy has praised the strength of bilateral relations between the US and Qatar, pointing out that the next strategic economic dialogue will create a plan for future enhancement of commercial cooperation in the digital economy, energy, logistic transport, and supply chains.



## Saudi Arabia

### [Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal Meets Saudi Arabia's Commerce Minister, Discusses Ways to Attract Investment](#)

September 18, 2022, The Print

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal met Saudi Arabia's Minister of Commerce and the Minister of Information in charge Majid Alkassabi on Sunday (September 18) and discussed ways to attract investment in order to boost the economic ties between New Delhi and Riyadh.

### [SCO Summit 2022: Middle Eastern Countries Keen on Joining Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#)

September 17, 2022, CGTN

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been attracting widespread global attention, with some Middle Eastern countries expressing their desire to be a part of the organization, due to SCO's key role in global trade.

## Syria

### [Syria Says Five Killed in Israeli Air Attack on Damascus Airport](#)

September 17, 2022, AL Jazeera

Israel has carried out an air attack on Syria's Damascus International Airport and other positions south of the capital, killing five soldiers and causing material damage, the ministry of defence said.

### [U.S. Military Base Targeted in Failed Rocket Attack in Syria, CENTCOM Says](#)

September 19, 2022, Axios

The Green Village military base in northeast Syria that hosts American troops were subjected to a "failed" rocket attack on Sunday (September 18) evening, the U.S. Central Command said.

### [Syria Calls for Forcing Israel to Join NPT, Condemns US Double Standards on Non-proliferation](#)

September 17, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

A Syrian envoy to the UN has urged the international community to compel Israel to join Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) while also slamming Washington's double standards and support for the occupying regime.

### [Syria May 'Return to Larger-scale Fighting', UN Warns in New Report](#)

September 15, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Syria's simmering 11-year war is at risk of boiling up, once again, with a return to large-scale combat after several frontlines across the country flared up in recent months, the United Nations warned in a new report.

## Türkiye

### [PM Modi Meets Turkey's Erdogan at SCO Summit, Discusses Bilateral Cooperation](#)

September 16, 2022, Hindustan Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations and discussed ways to deepen cooperation in diverse sectors.

### [Look East Policy Prompts Turkey to Eye SCO](#)

September 18, 2022, Global Times

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan reportedly said he was considering membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) for his country. A successful bid would make Turkey the first member of NATO to join the Eurasian group.

### [Turkey Condemns U.S. Decision on Cyprus Arms Embargo](#)

September 17, 2022, Reuters

Turkey's foreign ministry said it strongly condemned the expansion of a decision taken by the United States in September 2020 to lift its arms embargo on Cyprus.

## UAE

### [UAE, India, Israel Ties Win-Win for All: Envoy](#)

September 13, 2022, Khaleej Times

The UAE strives for a "righteous narrative" and is keen to connect people and businesses from India to Israel from its unique position in the Middle East. "Linking people together and making new friends is what makes businesses stronger," said Mohamed Al Khaja, the UAE's Ambassador to Israel, in Tel Aviv.

### [India to Increase Flight Services to UAE to Curtail Spike in Airfares, Minister V Muraleedharan Says in Dubai](#)

September 16, 2022, Gulf News

A visiting Indian Minister said his government would take steps to increase flight services between India and the UAE to curtail the huge spike in airfares in the sector.

## Yemen

### [US Secretary of State to Meet Chairman of Yemeni Presidential Council](#)

September 19, 2022, Middle East Eye

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet the Yemeni Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council Rashad al-Alimi on Monday (September 19) in New York, the State Department said as world dignitaries arrive for the UN General Assembly.



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