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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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Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003.
www.delhipolicygroup.org
Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 1
Bahrain .................................................................................................................................. 2
Egypt ..................................................................................................................................... 3
Iraq .......................................................................................................................................... 4
Iran ........................................................................................................................................ 5
Israel ...................................................................................................................................... 7
Jordan ................................................................................................................................... 8
Kuwait ................................................................................................................................. 9
Lebanon .............................................................................................................................. 10
Oman ................................................................................................................................... 11
Qatar ..................................................................................................................................... 12
Saudi Arabia ..................................................................................................................... 13
Syria ....................................................................................................................................... 15
Türkiye ................................................................................................................................ 16
UAE ...................................................................................................................................... 17
Yemen .................................................................................................................................. 18
Abstract

Continuing the deepening India-Saudi Arabia partnership, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman visited New Delhi on October 22 and met India’s Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, and Power and Renewable Energy Minister R.K. Singh. The two sides are planning to create a renewable energy grid by linking India’s Gujarat coast to the Gulf with deep sea cables. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman is likely to visit India in November 2022 prior to attending the G20 Summit scheduled in Indonesia.

UAE’s President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan congratulated Chinese President Xi Jinping for being re-elected as the General Secretary of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) for the third term. Meanwhile, highlighting Saudi Arabia’s strong bonds with China and Russia, South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa signalled “Saudi Arabia’s interest in joining BRICS”. China, on its part, has voiced support for the expansion of the ‘BRICS’.

Amidst the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, underscoring Iran’s deepening strategic partnership with Russia, the US has alleged that Iran had sent military personnel to ‘Crimea’ to train Russians in the use of drones that would target Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure. Iran, on its part, strongly condemned France, Britain, and Germany’s calls for a UN probe into accusations that Tehran is supplying drones to Moscow. Among other major regional developments, open-source intelligence reports indicated UAE deploying the Israeli-made ‘Barak Air Defence System’ in the country.

On the energy front, even as the US-led West shuns Russia’s energy sector, Turkey has agreed with Russia’s suggestion to form a natural gas hub in the country. Turkey also rejected the US’s “bullying” of Saudi Arabia for OPEC’s decision to cut crude production.

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

Israel and Bahrain Sign Historic Agriculture Agreement

October 19, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

During the International Summit on Food Technologies from the Sea and the Desert taking place in Eilat, the agriculture ministers of Israel and Bahrain signed a first-of-its-kind agreement for cooperation in the field of agriculture.

Hunt for Investment in the Middle East: Hong Kong Finance Chief to Lead Delegation to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia as Part of Policy Push

October 21, 2022, South China Morning Post

Hong Kong’s financial secretary is embarking on a series of high-profile visits to the Middle East on a mission to seek investment opportunities in new regions and carve a path to recovery for an economy battered by the Covid-19 pandemic.
Egypt, Israel and PA Agree to Develop Natural Gas Field off the Shores of Gaza

October 19, 2022, Egypt Independent

Israeli media reported that Egypt, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority have agreed to develop a natural gas field off the shores of the Gaza Strip.
Iraq

Iraq Reiterates Support for OPEC+, Saudi Arabia
October 18, 2022, Reuters

Iraq's foreign ministry said that it refuses any threatening or pressuring policy, reiterating its support for OPEC+ and Saudi Arabia after the alliance's decision to cut oil production by 2 million barrels per day caused a rift between Washington and Riyadh.

Iraq: Prime Minister Designate Vows to Combat Corruption
October 17, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Muhammad Shayaa Al-Sudani pledged to combat rampant corruption in state institutions, following reports that $2.5 billion had been embezzled from the trust account of the General Commission of Taxes held at the Rafidain Bank.
Iran

White House Says Iran Sent Personnel to Crimea to Train Russians to Use Drones
October 21, 2022, CNN
The White House says Iranian military personnel have visited Crimea to assist with Russian operations targeting civilian infrastructure in Ukraine using drones.

At least 10 Iranians Said Killed by Ukraine as Moscow-Iran Arms Ties Seem to Deepen
October 21, 2022, The Times of Israel
Ukrainian strikes in the past week against Russia’s ongoing invasion killed at least 10 Iranians, a Ukrainian official told Hebrew media.

Iran Condemns Call for UN Probe Into Alleged Use of Its Drones in Ukraine
October 23, 2022, Middle East Monitor
Iran strongly condemned a call by France, Germany, and Britain for the United Nations to probe accusations that Russia has used Iranian-origin drones to attack Ukraine, its foreign ministry said.

Protests in Berlin, US Cities in Solidarity with Iranian Women
October 23, 2022, AL Jazeera
There have been protests on the streets of Berlin, Washington, and Los Angeles in solidarity with Iranian women who have faced a violent government crackdown.

Iran to File Lawsuit Against US for Its Direct Role in Recent Unrest: Top Judiciary Official
October 22, 2022, Press TV (Iran)
A court in Tehran will determine the damage caused and will issue the necessary verdict against the US, said Kazem Gharibabadi, Deputy Chief of the Iranian Judiciary and secretary of the High Council for Human Rights.

US, Israel, Saudi Arabia Form a ‘Sinister Triangle’ against Iran: IRGC Navy Commander
October 23, 2022, Press TV (Iran)
Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy asserted that the recent foreign-backed riots that spread across the country, have been masterminded and steered by a threeosome group of states, namely the US, the Israeli regime, and Saudi Arabia.
US Prefers Diplomacy on Iran but Sees no Nuclear Deal for Now - Secretary Blinken

October 21, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

The United States believes diplomacy is the best way to address Iran's nuclear program but sees no imminent revival of the 2015 nuclear deal for now because of Tehran's injection of extraneous issues, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

Iran Claims US ‘in rush’ to Reach Nuclear Deal Despite Public Comments

October 22, 2022, AL Arabiya

Iran’s foreign minister claimed that the US is in a rush to get a nuclear deal with Iran, despite public comments by American officials saying a deal is no longer their priority.

FBI Found Documents Containing Classified Intelligence on Iran and China at Mar-a-Lago

October 22, 2022, NBC News

The FBI found documents containing classified intelligence regarding Iran and China at former President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home, say two people familiar with the matter.
Israel

Adani Defence, Israel Weapon Industries Unveil India’s First AI-based Futuristic Firing System

October 23, 2022, The Times of Israel

Adani Defence and Aerospace, along with its partner Israel Weapon Industries (IWI), have unveiled India’s first AI-based firing system ‘ARBEL’, the next-generation small arms solution at the DefExpo 2022 being held at Gandhinagar.

First Israeli Barak Air-Defence System Deploys to UAE, Bigger Deals Expected: Sources

October 19, 2022, Breaking Defence

A version of the Israeli-made Barak air defence system has been deployed to the United Arab Emirates, the first of what they expect to be a substantial contract for more systems.

Israel, Ukraine Discuss Air Defence Systems After Drone Strikes

October 21, 2022, AL Jazeera

Ukrainian and Israeli officials have held talks about Kyiv’s request for Israel to provide air defence assistance, days after Russia allegedly deployed Iranian “kamikaze” drones as part of a new wave of air raids on the war-torn country.

After Cutting Ties with Iran, Albanian PM Arrives in Israel to Talk Cybersecurity

October 23, 2022, The Times of Israel

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama arrived in Israel on Sunday (October 23) for a three-day visit that will focus on cybersecurity. Rama is slated to meet with Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who had invited him to Israel.

With the Help of Israel, Morocco is the First African Country to Enter the Drone Manufacturers Club

October 15, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Morocco has entered the club of drone manufacturers by virtue of the recent deal it concluded with Israel, according to which Morocco will manufacture Israeli combat drones.
Jordan

As Israeli-Arab Negev Forum Prepares to Reconvene, Members Try To Bring in Jordan

October 20, 2022, The Times of Israel

As Negev Forum countries prepare for their next meetings in the coming months, an effort to bring Jordan into the fold has intensified, US and Mideast diplomats said.

Jordan FM Calls for Collective Arab Role in Resolving Syria Crisis

October 20, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Jordan Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi has called for a "collective Arab role" to resolve the Syrian crisis and "end the catastrophic situation" in the country.
Kuwait

Kuwait's New Government Sworn in After Reshuffle Aimed at Defusing Tensions

October 17, 2022, Reuters

Kuwait's crown prince swore in the new government on Monday (October 17) following a reshuffle aimed at addressing lawmakers' objections to the original cabinet line-up and ending a prolonged political feud.
Lebanon

Lebanese Exchange Rate Chaos Causes Economic Hardship

October 13, 2022, Deutsche Welle

Lebanon is in the midst of a currency crisis and has devalued its local currency. But implementing a new exchange rate policy is set to have catastrophic consequences on people's daily lives.
Oman

Oman’s Growing Concern Over Chinese Influence in Gulf Region
October 22, 2022, ANI

China has been increasingly trying to consolidate its presence in Oman, however, Muscat has grown wary of Beijing and is on the course of thwarting Chinese ambitions.

Oman-China Bilateral Trade on Strong Growth Trajectory
October 13, 2022, Zawya (Refinitiv)

Bilateral trade between Oman and China surged, in value terms, to RO 32 billion in 2021, representing an increase of 71.5 per cent over the previous year. Chinese imports from Oman increased by 18.5 percent to 44.082 million tonnes in 2021, according to Li Lingping, Chinese Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman.
Qatar

US, Qatar Share Vision for Security of the Middle East
October 23, 2022, Gulf Times
The US and Qatar share a vision for the security of the region, that continues and is more important than ever in today's complex world, noted US CENTCOM Commander.

Two Giant Chinese Pandas Land in Qatar for First-Ever ‘Panda Diplomacy’ in Middle East Ahead of This Year’s World Cup
October 20, 2022, South China Morning Post
With the 2022 World Cup just about a month away, two giant pandas from China arrived in Qatar and will spend the foreseeable future living in an enclosed environment designed to mimic their natural environment.
Saudi Arabia

Saudi Crown Prince Expected to Visit India Next Month
October 23, 2022, The Hindu

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman is likely to visit India on his way to Indonesia in mid-November, to meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The visit is expected to last a few hours on November 14.

India, Saudi Arabia Explore Renewable Energy Projects via Undersea Cables
October 21, 2022, Business Standard

India and Saudi Arabia are reportedly pursuing a cross-country initiative carried by the tide of a new era of energy diplomacy, and the Gujarat coast may soon be linked to the Middle East with deep sea cables, creating a green energy grid.

Saudi Arabia Wants to Join BRICS, Says South African President Cyril Ramaphosa
October 20, 2022, The Economic Times

Saudi Arabia wants to join the BRICS alliance, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has stated, signalling a potential expansion of the bloc amid growing tensions with the US over the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

China Supports Expansion of BRICS Membership: MOFA
October 20, 2022, CGTN

The Chinese Foreign Ministry voiced support for the expansion of BRICS after reports about Saudi Arabia showing its intention to join the group that presently comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Saudi Forum Set to Draw U.S. Business Leaders Despite Tensions
October 23, 2022, Reuters

A public spat between the United States and Saudi Arabia will not deter top Wall Street executives and U.S. business leaders from a flagship investment event where the kingdom will seek deals to reduce its economy’s reliance on oil.

China, Saudi Arabia Vow Deeper Energy Cooperation, Oil Market Stability
October 22, 2022, Global Times

China and Saudi Arabia have agreed to strengthen energy cooperation, maintain international oil market stability and jointly face risks and challenges.
Saudi Crown Prince Not Attending Arab Summit on Doctors’ Advice

October 23, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will not attend the Arab summit to be held on Nov. 1 in Algeria, in compliance with a doctors’ recommendation to avoid travel, the Algerian presidency said in a statement.
Syria

US Denounces Reconciliation Between Syria and Hamas
October 23, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Speaking to reporters in Washington, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said that "the Assad regime's outreach to this [HAMAS] terrorist organization only reinforces for us its isolation."

Israeli Strike Targeted Iranian Drone Assembly Site Near Damascus, Syrian Rights Monitor Says
October 23, 2022, Haaretz

An airstrike by Israel on October 21 near Damascus destroyed an Iranian-backed drone manufacturing and weapons storage site, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.
Türkiye

President Erdogan Says He Agreed with Putin to Form Natural Gas Hub in Turkey
October 19, 2022, The Moscow Times
Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that he had agreed with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to create a "gas hub" in Turkey.

Russia Discusses Ukraine in Calls with France, Turkey
October 23, 2022, The Moscow Times
Russia’s Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu held phone calls with his French and Turkish counterparts, during which they discussed Ukraine, the Russian defence ministry said.

Türkiye: 'We Do Not Accept US Threats, Bullying Against Saudi Arabia'
October 22, 2022, Middle East Monitor
Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has stated that his country cannot accept US threats to Saudi Arabia after the OPEC+ decision to reduce oil production.

Türkiye: 'Lift Sanctions on Venezuela, Iran to Alleviate Oil Price Crisis'
October 22, 2022, Middle East Monitor
Türkiye has called for lifting sanctions imposed by the US and the West on Venezuela and Iran to help alleviate the international energy price crisis.
UAE

UAE’s President Congratulates Chinese President Xi Jinping on His Re-election as Country’s Leader

October 23, 2022, Khaleej Times

UAE’s President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has sent a congratulatory cable to Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, for being re-elected General Secretary of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) for a third term.

UAE Relied on Expertise of Retired US Troops to Beef up Its Military

October 19, 2022, Stars and Stripes

Over the past seven years, 280 US military retirees have sought federal authorization to work for the United Arab Emirates — far more than for any other country, according to documents obtained by The Washington Post under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
Yemen

UN, International Community Condemn Houthi Drone Attack on Yemeni Oil Terminal

October 20, 2022, Arab News

The UN condemned an armed drone attack launched by Yemen’s Houthi militia on a southern oil terminal in Hadramout province a day earlier, saying it was a “deeply worrying” military escalation.