Growing India-South Korea Relations

What is the issue?

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- Recent political developments between India and South Korea have created an opening to share mutual security interests in Asia.
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- However, cultural and political differences could present a challenge to forging effective regional ties.
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What are the recent developments?

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- **South Korea** - There is rising tension with China, concerning the US-supplied missile and radar deployment in its territory.
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- The prolonged confrontation with China on the deployment of Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) constrained the relationship.
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- The pros and cons of THAAD is debated among the US, South Korea, and China in terms of its purpose and application.
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- **Bilateral** - **South Korea** is taking a bold step by inviting India into South Korea's diplomatic domain.
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- South Korean President dispatched a special envoy to Prime Minister Modi to reinforce bilateral relations.
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- It reiterated its message of placing India on par with the US, Russia, China, and Japan.
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- It expressed its desire for stronger security cooperation with India in designing various levels of official talks more regularly.
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- It played a critical role in moderating opposing members in India's

application for the Nuclear Suppliers' Group's membership in a plenary meeting.
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- **India,** on its part, started building an increasingly incompatible stance toward North Korea.
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- It also implemented a plan to launch a strategic initiative, 'Korea Plus' to facilitate Korean FDI and forge larger economic cooperation.
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- At Seoul's request, it discontinued the provision of training courses to North Korean students in the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, Dehradun.
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- It also suspended the training of North Korean soldiers in Indian languages in a Madhya Pradesh-based military school.
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What are the common interests?

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- **Regional Stability** - The regional tensions in South Asia especially between India and China create a common interest for India and South Korea.
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- This could be a collaborative approach for regional stability.
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- **Nuclear** - South Korea's key interest in managing their nuclear neighbour (North Korea) is similar to India's considerations toward Pakistan.
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- The US alliance system, established with South Korea and Japan, puts pressure on North Korea to cap its nuclear programme.
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- Containing North Korea is beneficial to India's economic and regional ambit in East Asia.
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- It also adds to its approach to nuclear non-proliferation regime as a responsible nuclear state.
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- **Diplomatic** - There is long lasting regional security dilemma with the continued verbal provocations and a conventional arms race.
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- Thus, despite the alliance system, Seoul appears to be in searching for a stronger diplomatic stand on imminent regional issues beyond the alliance

system.
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- South Korea's approach to India comes with strategic optimism for expanding ties to ensure a convergence of interest in planning global and regional strategic frameworks.
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What lies ahead?

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- Thus South Korea's approach to India under these circumstances is a gesture towards balancing East Asian affairs more broadly than before.
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- In all, the strategic ties between Seoul and New Delhi present promise for mutual interest as well as regional stability.
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- However, the incipient stage of growing ties requires more careful study to overcome a number of shortcomings.
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- The emerging political interests and motivations between the two countries still lag behind the regional and global demand.
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- Moderating the dissimilar style of diplomacy and communication under cultural differences is another task.
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Source: Business Line

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