India's Role for the Koreas

What is the issue?

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- The South Korean President, Moon Jae-in's visit to Delhi is of significance to India.
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- It offers scope for India's role in reconciliation between the North and the South Koreas.
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What are the recent developments?

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- Talks between US Secretary of State and his hosts in North Korea ended in accusations.
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- This has impacted the American diplomacy on denuclearising the Korean Peninsula.
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- America demands for a quick and comprehensive denuclearisation of North Korea.
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- However, North Korea's agenda on political and military trust building is a challenge.
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- On the other hand, South Korean President is particular of reconciliation between the two Koreas.
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- Amidst this, Moon's visit to Delhi offers possibility for strengthening India’s role in the Korean Peninsula.
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How did India become a part of this?

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- **War** - Independent India played a significant role in the Korean Peninsula.
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- This was especially in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.
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- India also maintained diplomatic relations with the North and South during the Cold War.
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- **Economy** - With 1991 economic reforms, South Korea became an important participant in India’s economy.
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- Russia and China also increased their collaboration with South Korea for economic gains.
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- **North Korea** - Resultantly, the socialist North Korea was increasingly isolated.
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- It looked for making up for the loss of its old communist allies.
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- It thus started focussing on developing nuclear capability.
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- **Pakistan** - Eventually, the Indian Subcontinent became a part of North Korea's strategy.
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- North Korea’s atomic quest found convergences with that of Pakistan.
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- North Korea and Pakistan thus stepped up their nuclear and missile cooperation.
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- Certainly, this strained the India’s relationship with North Korea.
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What could India's role now be?

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- India is now in a position to develop a more strategic view of the Korean Peninsula.
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i. South Korean President is increasingly seeking reconciliation with the North
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ii. there is much international scepticism about the prospects for this peace
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- Given this, Indian support for reconciliation would be of great political value to South Korea.
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- Importantly, it will align Delhi with the long-term interests of the Korean people.
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- For, they had been the victims of troubles in the divided peninsula over the last 7 decades.
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What are the possible challenges?

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- The post-Cold War Asian landscape is shifting.
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- The relations between major powers - US, Russia, China and Japan - are strained.
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- This is a new challenge that Asia had not to deal with in decades.
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- Meanwhile, prosperity brought by globalisation to Asia over the recent decades is under stress.
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- Measures against free trade and open borders, by the Western leaders are contributing to this.
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What lies ahead?

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- South Korea has announced a “New Southern Policy”.
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- This looks beyond Northeast Asia to focus on Southeast Asia, Australia and India.
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- Likewise, India's Act East policy now has a much wider coverage, the Indo-Pacific.
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- These strategies should be taken forward, to reap the benefits of geopolitical developments.
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- With global trade war unfolding, Delhi and Seoul have an urgent need to liberalise the bilateral trade relations.
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- The two sides also need to focus on expanding bilateral security and defence cooperation.
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- They should work with other countries to promote a stable Asian balance of power system.
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Source: Indian Express

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