Korean Peace - A Comprehensive Analysis

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- North Korea has lately been engaged in a string of diplomatic engagements to resolve the nuclear standoff in the Korean peninsula.
\n
- While this is a positive, the other stakeholders will have to adopt a pragmatic approach to negotiations in order to achieve sustain peace.
\n

\n\n



\n\n

What is the historic prespective to the Koran crisis?

\n\n

\n
- **History -** The Korean War (1950-53) split the Korean peninsula into the North and South Korea along the 38th parallel latitude.
\n
- The North was communist dictatorship backed by USSR, while the South flourished into a vibrant democracy that is part of the US security alliance.
\n
- After the fall of USSR and re-unification of East and West Germany, the North Korean regime got isolated internationally and saw a threat to its survival.
\n
- Notably, both the North and South Korean governments claim to be the official representatives of the entire of Korea and do not recognize each other.
\n
- **Survival -** While China is North Korea's strongest ally, despite pressure from Pyongyang, Beijing recognized South Korea in 1992.
\n
- South Korea has now developed into a strong economic power and has

become one of China’s biggest trade partner and investment destination.
\n
- All these factors have made North Korean leadership increasingly insecure as an US assisted South Koran annexation of North loomed large.
\n
- While both Koreas have a stated official policy for reunification, neither seems ready to accept the political leadership of the other.
\n
- Consequently, North Korea took refuge in developing nuclear weapons for securing its political survival since 2006.
\n

\n\n

What caused the recent tensions?

\n\n

\n
- **Weapons Program -** North has conducted 6 nuclear tests thus far and the latest one in Sept 2017 is said to be 6 times as powerful as Hiroshima bomb.

\n
- The current North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong Un took over from his father Kim Jong Il in 2011 and has since accelerated the weapons mission.
\n
- While his father conducted 16 missile launch tests during his 16 year rule till 2011, the current leader in his 7 years rule has conducted 80 launches.
\n
- The last test in Nov 2017 successfully demonstrated the “Hwasong-15 missile”, which has a 12,000 km range, and has the entire US territory within its reach.
\n
- **Diplomatic Standoff -** The Weapons program got the whole world concerned and multiple sanctions were passed in the UN.
\n
- These effectively cut-off all international ties of North Korea except China which continued to trade defying sanctions (although largely unofficially).
\n
- Notably, China too got concerned due to
\n
- Due to North’s continued intimidations, Mr. Trump had threatened the Mr.Kim with a furious attack like never before in human history.
\n

\n\n

What are the evolving diplomatic engagements?

\n\n

\n
- Despite the harsh rhetoric of the other stakeholders, South Korean president Mr. Moon had been paddling a softer approach towards Pyongyang all along.
\n
- Consequently, in Jan 2018, Mr. Kim had spelt out his willingness to negotiate a solution, which set of a new diplomatic breakthrough.
\n
- North Korea participated in the recent Winter Olympic Games hosted by South Korea in Feb, and also Mr. Kim's sister led a delegation to the South Korea.
\n
- Kim has also paused his weapons program and he recently travelled to Beijing for a short diplomatic meet with the Chinese premier Mr. Xi Jinping.
\n
- A South Korean delegeation also visited Pyongyang, and Mr. Kim is said to have conveyed his willingness to denuclearise if negotiations are successful.
\n
- Additonally, North and South Korean leadership is touted to meet in April at the "Peace House in Panmunjom" for furthering the warmth.
\n
- Also, the North Koran and US leadership are expected to meet sometime in May, which is touted to be the most significant part of the engagement.
\n

\n\n

What are the expectations of various stakeholders?

\n\n

\n
- **South Korea –** South wants to restore peace in the peninsula by sustaining this dialogue and furthering the cause of reunification.
\n
- It would also like to be kept in loop with any US decision regarding the North to ensure that its interests aren't compromised.
\n
- Notably, despite the multi-power geopolitics in the Korean peninsula, the current initiatives are solely powered by the North and South Korea.
\n
- **North Korea -** The North has been effectively isolated from the world due to sanctions, and it would like all sanctions to be lifted to help its economy.
\n

- It would also want to ensure its regime survival and its concerns regarding the massive US troop presence in South Korea also needs to be addressed.
\n
- While the desire for reunification is strong in both the Koreas, current engagements can increase the chances of a mutual and peaceful unification.
\n
- **China -** It hopes that the peace process will result in denuclearisation of its neighbourhood and withdrawal of the US troop and arms from South Korea.
\n
- While the reunification of the Koreas isn't to China's liking, the possibility of that happening anytime soon is low and isn't concern for Beijing currently.
\n
- **USA -** For the US, it is treaty obligated to protect South Korea in addition to its assumed role of being the "world saviour".
\n
- Additionally, it would want to curtail Beijing's increasing clout in the region, which demands an increased engagement in region's conflicts.
\n
- But there are multiple hardliners in the Trump administration, who might vouch for unrealistic expectations and thwart a deal, which is a genuine risk.
\n
- **Others –** Japan is also a key member in the Korean neighbourhood, and has been advocating a hard-line on North Korea for long.
\n
- Notably, it's also part of the US military alliance and fears that a pro-North Korean shift by US would weaken its case vis-a-vis China.
\n
- Additionally, Russia was an erstwhile player in the region during the Soviet era and has been asserting itself worldwide again under Mr. Putin.
\n
- It may want to engage and has to be satiated through suitable dialogues.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering