



The nuclear challenge

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(Mains GS 2 : Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.)

Context:

- U.S. President Joe Biden called for “stern deterrence” in response to North Korea’s nuclear programme.
- Pyongyang angrily accused the Biden administration of being “hostile”.
- These developments suggest that both countries are headed towards a diplomatic showdown.

The U.S. pressure tactic:

- In his first congressional address last week, Mr. Biden said the nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea posed a “serious threat to America’s security and world security” and promised to respond through “diplomacy and stern deterrence”.
- His administration has also completed a review of the U.S.’s North Korea policy.
- Mr. Biden is likely to steer between Barack Obama’s “strategic patience” and Donald Trump’s top-level summitry in dealing with the North Korean nuclear challenge.

The unresolved foreign policy puzzle:

- North Korea has remained an unresolved foreign policy puzzle for all post-War American Presidents.
- In recent times, U.S. Presidents have shown a willingness to diplomatically engage with Pyongyang.
- The Clinton administration had signed a framework agreement with Pyongyang to halt its nuclear programme.
- Mr. Obama had initiated talks with North Korea in 2012, which collapsed after Pyongyang launched a satellite.

- He then adopted a wait-and-watch approach, which came to be called “strategic patience”.

Progress in Trump era:

Mr. Trump altered his predecessor’s North Korea policy by reaching out to the regime and meeting its leader, Kim Jong-un, thrice, but without a breakthrough.

- In theory, the Trump administration and North Korea had agreed to a complete de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but failed to agree on its formula.
- In the 2019 Trump-Kim summit at Hanoi, the U.S. proposed removal of sanctions for de-nuclearisation, but North Korea rejected it.
- Pyongyang had taken a phased approach and sought sanctions removal in return. Ever since, there has been no improvement in ties.

The challenge to new administration:

- After Mr. Biden assumed office, North Korea had conducted short-range missile tests, which the U.S. saw as a provocation.
- Mr. Biden does not have many good options in dealing with North Korea.
- The U.S.’s key goal in northeastern Asia is the de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.
- And the practical way to achieve this is through diplomacy as a military strike on North Korea, a nuclear power, is out of the question.
- Though the Trump-Kim summits did not lead to any breakthrough, they have still created a diplomatic momentum for engagement.
- Despite its threats to expand its nuclear programme, North Korea sticks to the self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests.

Conclusion:

- The North, as acknowledged by Mr. Kim recently, is going through a tough economic crisis and is open to talks.
- Mr. Biden should seize this opportunity and try to reach common ground with Mr. Kim that addresses both North Korea’s economic worries and the U.S.’s nuclear concerns.