

General Studies – 2; Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate

US - North Korea Relations

1) Introduction

- North Korea has remained isolated from the international community, with its governmental, economic and other operations veiled in secrecy.
- Despite sanctions and warnings from the UN and other nations, North Korea has continued to engage in creation of nuclear weapons.
- Constant provocations by North Korea towards other nations especially the US by conducting nuclear tests has made dealing with it all the more difficult.

2) Background

- USA – North Korea relations suffered due to lack of policy consistency.
- Bill Clinton Government intimated talks with North Korea and eased restrictions.
- Later, Bush administration had included North Korea in axis of evil, cancelled direct talks and annulled the 1994 agreement.
- North Korea in retaliation pulled out from NPT and initiated nuclear development provoking a fresh crisis.
- China and Russia initiated six party talks in 2004. Later they collapsed and North Korea did its nuclear test in 2006.
- Then onwards North Korea made a steady nuclear progress.

3) Why US is worried about North Korea?

- North Korea has recently tested an intercontinental ballistic missile that can hit Alaska in United States of America.
- It is a clear indication that USA warnings to North Korea are not having any impact.
- Stick and sanction policy with a reliance on china is not working against North Korea.
- By 2019, North Korea will be able to develop long-range missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland.

4) Reaction from North Korea

- The priority of North Korea is to protect its regime and have an acceptance for the same by the global community.
- Though China has evolved as a guarantor, it has its own stakes with USA.
- So, Kim Jong-un of North Korea sees that nuclear capability is only the ultimate guarantee to protect his regime.

5) US action in recent time

- Cutting out the supplies through more sanctions and throttling the supply of essential items to North Korea.
- The US closer defence ties with Japan and South Korea, has been pressing for more military intervention that can act as deterrence for further proliferation of weapons by North Korea.
- US deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) anti-ballistic missile defence system in South Korea.

- Trump's recent actions in Syria and Afghanistan seem to be signalling stern message to North Korea.

6) Concerns / Challenges

- International isolation indeed has hardened the position of North Korean leaders. It has brought only hardships to the people of North Korea.
- Isolation and sanctions against North Korea has made Kim regime more paranoid on the west. Recent death of an American student Otto Warmbier is an example of this.

7) Way Forward

- Deterrence and sanctions won't produce a lasting solution.
- USA must hold direct negotiations with North Korea by assuring help for its development, providing it energy security, food security etc. A sense of insecurity should be eliminated.
- The U.S. will need to provide assurances relating to regime acceptance and a gradual normalisation of relations.
- The way forward is to engage in talks and South Korea president Moon Jae-in has also expressed his willingness for the same.
- China is also important stake holder in case of North Korea. Help of China would catalyse the peace process.
- Removal of THAAD missile from South Korea will ease the situation for both North Korea and China.
- The United Nations should try to aware North Korea of its humanitarian needs towards its citizens. It should help North Korea to enhance its economy and maximize its trade to gain its trust.
- Creation of a customized developmental plan by UN for North Korea to address its problems of food security, poverty, economic problems etc.
- Incentivise trade agreements with neighbouring countries to reduce its negative balance of trade, opening up its economy, increased people-to-people contacts, cultural contacts, etc.