

North Korea launches Ballistic Missiles

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North Korea launched at least two ballistic missiles, said the US and Japan, in the first such tests since US president Joe Biden took office and what Japan called a threat to security and peace in the region. Pyongyang's ballistic missiles are banned under United Nations Security Council resolutions. Nuclear-armed North Korea has often used weapons tests as provocations to both Washington and Seoul.

In news: North Korea launches first ballistic missile tests for a year in challenge to Biden administration

Placing it in syllabus: Foreign Affairs

Dimensions

- North Korea's nuclear program
- Reasons for the Nuclearization
- Impact on the Region
- Implications for India
- Implications for the Global Politics (Denuclearization efforts)

Content:

North Korea's nuclear program:

- The nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula continued to deteriorate throughout 2006, reaching a low point in October when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test at the Punggye-ri test site
- The North Korean nuclear test did not, however, produce a significant yield. The yield from this test appeared to be less than 1 kiloton.
- Immediately following the test, UNSC Resolution 1718

imposed sanctions on North Korea.

- In July 2007, North Korea began shutting down and sealing its main nuclear facilities at Yongbyon-kun under IAEA supervision.
- Further progress was made in the Six-Party Talks when the parties adopted the Second Action Plan, calling on North Korea to disable its main nuclear facilities and submit a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs by 31 December 2007.
- Delays with the U.S. removal of North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list contributed to North Korean delays in meeting its own commitments, and eventually Pyongyang announced in late August 2008 that it had restored the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon-kun, and barred international inspectors from accessing the site.
- After a dispute over rocket launches in March 2009, North Korea kicked out IAEA and U.S. inspectors and began to rebuild the Yongbyon 5MW(e) reactor for the purpose of reprocessing plutonium from its spent fuel rods, in contravention of its previous promises at the Six-Party Talks.
- On 12 February 2013, North Korea conducted a third nuclear test at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Facility.
- North Korea claimed to have successfully tested a “lighter, miniaturized atomic bomb.”
- On 6 January 2016 North Korea announced it had successfully tested a thermonuclear device at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site.
- On 9 September 2016, North Korea carried out its fifth nuclear test to coincide with the 68th anniversary of the founding of North Korea. The U.S. Geological Survey registered the test as a 5.3 magnitude earthquake.
- Shortly afterwards, North Korea released a defiant statement warning its “enemies” that it now has the capability to produce a warhead small enough to fit onto the end of a missile and can retaliate against any

attack.

- In a speech marking the beginning of 2017, Kim Jong-un emphasized the advancement of North Korea's missile and nuclear program in his outlined goals for North Korea.
- In contrast to his 2016 address, Kim made explicit mention of nuclear tests, noting the (allegedly) successful hydrogen bomb test of September 2016, as well as claiming that North Korea was entering the "final stage of preparation for the test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)."
- 2017 saw significant developments in the North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs, as well as blustery rhetoric between North Korea and U.S. President Donald Trump.
- On 3 July 2017, North Korea tested the Hwasong-14 ballistic missile, which the United States later confirmed to be an ICBM.
- On 8 August 2017, a leaked U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency report found that North Korea had produced miniaturized nuclear warheads capable of fitting on an ICBM.
- On 3 September 2017, North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test at Punggye-ri. According to initial U.S. intelligence assessments, the test released 140 kilotons of TNT equivalent, making it larger in explosive yield than the previous five tests combined.

Reasons for the Nuclearization:

Korean War and Cold War Legacy:

- North Korea's nuclearization intent is seemingly rooted in its paranoid attitude towards its neighbours.
- North Korea's nuclear ambitions date to the Korean War in the 1950s but came to the attention of the international community in 1992, when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discovered that its nuclear activities were more extensive than declared.

- In specifics, North Korea nuclear programme can be traced back to about 1962, when
- Pyongyang committed itself to what it called “all-fortressization”, which was the beginning of the hyper-militarized North Korea of today
- During the height of the Cold War, the United States deployed a mix of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons in South Korea, with numbers peaking as high as over 900 during the late 1960s.
- These American nukes remained in South Korea until the early 1990s. Faced with such an overwhelming military force not far from its borders, North Korea was feeling the pressure.

Deter the US, South Korea, and China:

- North Korea is also challenging the United States and its allies by its nuclearisation program for effective deterrent.
- North Korean leaders believed that nuclear weapons are the most effective weapon of deterrence.
- Possessing nuclear weapons means holding the political, psychological and diplomatic power against the enemy.

Ambitions of becoming Nuclear Weapon Country:

- North Korea wants to reaffirm its position as a “nuclear weapon country”. Despite economic difficulties due to the sanctions and protest from the international community, North Korea has shown no intention of giving up its nuclear program.
- Its target is to become a “nuclear weapon state” and improve its negotiating power with the US (from negotiation on denuclearisation of Korea peninsula to negotiation on a peace agreement)

Use nuclear weapon to bargain for direct negotiation with the US

- In 1953, North Korea and the US signed the Armistice Agreement, but since then, North Korea and South Korea have enjoyed no peace.
- As a result, it is necessary to negotiate again to replace the Armistice Agreement by another peace agreement.
- After the success of the third nuclear test and a series of missile tests, North Korea stated that it has mastered technology to produce nuclear weapons, so it should be treated as equal to other nuclear weapon states. It also asked the US to hold direct negotiation

Impact on the Region:

- Though paying a high price, North Korea is bent upon developing a strategic nuclear deterrent against present and potential adversaries, which have serious impacts on regional security.
- North Korea's nuclear weapons could lead to an arms race in the region.
- Today, both Japan and South Korea are within the reach of North Korean short and medium-range missiles.
- Whether these missiles are equipped with nuclear warheads or not, they will still pose a serious threat to the security of the two countries.
- Against this backdrop, Japan and South Korea are compelled to increase their military arsenal to deal with North Korea's nuclear threat.
- Consequently, Northeast Asia will be locked into an arms race, which may turn into a real war.
- In addition, North Korea's nuclear weapons programme may be used as a pretext by other countries to raise their military spending and acquisition of defence systems, undermining the economy-centric policy of countries in East Asia

Implications for India:

- If North Korea succeeds in realising its right to possess nuclear weapons, it would ignite a new arms race, with some countries seeking to possess nuclear weapons, undermining peace, security and prosperity.
- Specifically, Iran and Pakistan, often dubbed as the nuclear flashpoints, may be among the list.
- There is a possibility of North Korea's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups.
- North Korea is an underdeveloped economy. It has almost no industrial or agricultural products for export. Thus, nuclear technology and missiles could be its most important goods to sell for hard currency.
- During such technology transfers, nuclear and missile technologies would risk falling into the hands of terrorist and extremist groups. Thus, terrorist attacks would be no longer "suicide bombings," but "dirty bomb" terror attacks.

Implications for the Global Politics

- North Korea (aka the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK) is the only country to have withdrawn from the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to pursue a nuclear weapons program, and possesses an increasingly sophisticated nuclear arsenal.
- The DPRK remains outside of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and has repeatedly violated the international norm against nuclear testing by conducting tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, two tests in 2016, and a test in 2017.
- North Korea claimed its sixth nuclear test, in September 2017, was of a thermonuclear device.
- Although North Korea affirmed its commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, there has been little tangible progress towards denuclearization.

Mould your thought: The subject of North Korean nuclearisation has been deteriorating over time. Comment.

Approach to the answer:

- Introduction
- Discuss the reasons for North Korean Nuclear Program
- Discuss the history of Nuclear program and its growing intensity
- Mention its implications for the region
- Conclusion