

The Nuclear Challenge- U.S. and North Korea

What is the issue?

- US President Biden's recent remarks on North Korea's nuclear programme and Pyongyang's reaction for it has brought the issue back to the fore.
- North Korea's economic worries and the U.S.'s nuclearisation concerns need addressing.

What happened?

- US President Joe Biden called for "stern deterrence" in response to North Korea's nuclear programme.
- Pyongyang made an angry reaction, accusing the Biden administration of being "hostile."
- These suggest that both countries are headed towards a diplomatic showdown.

How has the US dealt with N. Korea's nuclear policy?

- 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".
- 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.

What has North Korea's stance been?

- 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.
- After Mr. Biden assumed office, North Korea had conducted short-range missile tests, which the U.S. saw as a provocation.

What is Biden's stance at present?

- 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.
- In his first congressional address, Biden said the nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea posed a "serious threat to America's security and world security."
- He promised to respond through "diplomacy and stern deterrence".
- His administration has also completed a review of the U.S.'s North Korea policy.

What is the best way forward for Biden?

- 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.
- The only practical way to achieve this is through diplomacy because 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.
- The North, as acknowledged by Mr. Kim recently, is going through a tough economic crisis and is open to talks.
- So, Mr. Biden should seize this opportunity and try to reach common ground with Mr. Kim.
- This should address both North Korea's economic worries and the U.S.'s nuclear concerns.

Source: The Hindu



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