

## North Korea: Nuke Crisis

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### Abstract

The devastation of Japan by atomic bombs convinced Kim II Sung to achieve nuclear capability to prevent future threats. Kim Jong Un has pursued his own policies in stark contrast to his late father. He has reduced the importance of the military and elevated the primacy of the party. The Seventh Congress of the Korean Workers Party was convened which lasted from 6 May 2018 till 9 May, 2018. Its primary aim was to reiterate the supremacy of Kim Jong Un as North Korea's undisputed leader and to fix a stamp of approval on the defensive nuclear deterrence concept. The Sixth nuclear test gave North Korea the capability of launching hydrogen bomb on the ICBM. The five UNSC sanctions seek to restrict fuel imports and other trade as well as restrict North Korean citizens to work abroad. The economy is growing at the rate 1.1% of which makes it an unsustainable picture. The Panmunjom Declaration states that a new era of peace has begun. North Korea's ally China believes in dual track policy and wants denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un has legitimized Korea as a nuclear power without extracting verifiable and irreversible dismantling of nukes. It neither has a time bound programme nor as comprehensive as Iran's deal.

**KEYWORDS:** Nuclear deterrence, ICBM, Panmunjom Declaration, unsustainable economy, dual track approach

### I. INTRODUCTION

The whole world closely followed the historic summit at Singapore on June 12, 2018 held between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jon un . The meeting was a history of all sorts. The oldest leader of the most powerful nation met the youngest firebrand leader in an attempt to negotiate over the escalated nuclear missile crisis in the Korean peninsula. North Korea had threatened to strike Guam which is a US military base. President Donald Trump had promised fire and fury over North Korea and was critical of his predecessors for allowing North Korean regime to last for so long. US President George Bush had condemned North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as "axis of evil". Kim agreed to break the ice out of the apprehension of further tightening of sanctions can affect his country's survival. North Korea wanted recognition as a nuclear weapon state since it feared a regime change instigated by the US. It also wanted withdrawal of US forces from South Korea and the lifting of sanctions.

### II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Korea was occupied by Japan following the Russo-Japanese war since 1910. Tokyo annexed the entire Korean peninsula. The Japanese military rule over Korea sought to exterminate Korean culture and language. Coal and hydroelectric power plants were set up in the north. After the Second World War Korea emerged as the second most industrialized nation in Asia after Japan. Korea regained independence following the Japanese surrender after the Second World War. Korea became independent on 15

August 1945. A democratic government was set up in the southern half of the peninsula called Republic of Korea while a communist government was set up in the north called Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) . The Korean War of 1950 was triggered after North Korean Military forces attacked the South in a bid to unify both the countries under Kim II Sung. To ward off the threat of communism Korea was split long the 38th parallel. North Korea adopted communist ideology led by Kim II Sung while South Korea embraced democracy under Syngman Rhee. The Korean war of 1950-53 resulted in the death of 3 million Korean soldiers, 58000 US soldiers, 1 million Chinese and 1000 British troops. US resorted to carpet bombing more than 635000 tons of explosives including 32557 tons of napalm bombs. The Korean War was much larger in scale than the bombing in South Pacific during her second world war. Both the nations became the members of the UN General Assembly in 1991.

Kim II Sung was the founder of North Korea. Kim II – Sung was anti-Japanese fighter and had fled to Soviet Union during Japanese reign in Korean peninsula. According to Dr. Stephen Linton the devastation of Japan by atomic bombs convinced Kim II Sung to achieve nuclear capability to prevent future threats. The Soviet Union and DPRK signed an agreement for co-operation in nuclear research in 1956. In the 1960's a research reactor at the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Complex was set up. The Soviet Union provided two additional research reactors. During 1970-1980 extensive work on uranium extraction, nuclear fuel enrichment technology, delivery systems was undertaken.

The US found a protégé in South Korea. But it suppressed democratic and human rights in South Korea from 1947 to 1980. It supported authoritative regimes of Syngman Rhee, Park Chung hee and Choon Doo hwan.

Kim Jong il adopted the doctrine of military first which made the military have an upper hand over the party. Kim Jong il developed a relatively complex network of civilian and military institutions to rule the country, the majority of which were led by relatives loyal to him like Korean Workers Party organ, like Politburo and Central Military Commission. Contrasting this policy, Kim Jong UN has advocated central role of the party and made the military subservient. There is no right to private property land and agriculture is collectivized. Media is controlled by the state and dissent is severely punished.

After assuming power Kim Jon Un has pursued his own policies in stark contrast to his late father. He has reduced the importance of the military and elevated the primacy of the party. The party's Central Military Commission has been reduced to 12 members and been brought under the control of the Cabinet. Since 2011 he has changed his Defence Minister 5 times and chief staff for 4 times. He appointed a civilian Hwang Pyongso to the top of military hierarchy. The proportion of Politburo member from armed forces has shrunk from 35% to 25 %. The Chinese influence was reduced by dismissing leaders close to Beijing. The execution of Kim Jong Un's uncle, Jang Sung Taek soured the relations with China, given his proximity with Beijing.

### **III. SEVENTH CONGRESS**

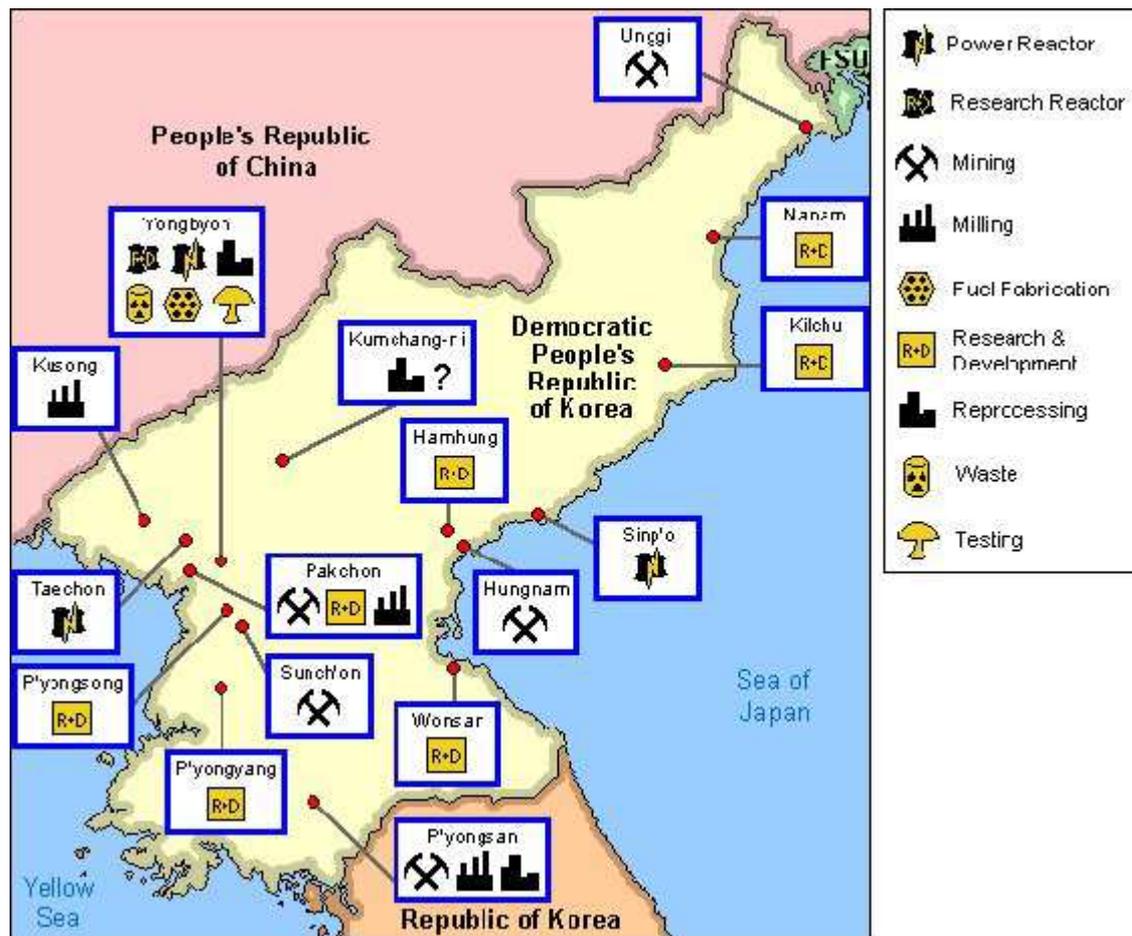
The Korean Workers Party has played a pivotal role right since its inception. The first two Congresses held in August 1946 and March 1948 under the aegis of the Soviet

Union paved the way for the establishment of North Korean state. The Third Congress in 1956 accorded primacy to Marxism-Leninism but the fifth Congress in 1970 embraced the ideology of 'Juche' or self-reliance. The Sixth Congress in 1980 approved the anointment of Kim Jong Il as the new leader. Amidst the turmoil after a huge gap of 38 years the Seventh Congress of the Korean Workers Party was convened which lasted from 6 May 2018 till 9 May, 2018. Its primary aim was to reiterate the supremacy of Kim Jong Un as North Korea's undisputed leader and to fix a stamp of approval on the defensive nuclear deterrence concept. The Party proclaimed that its industrial output had increased by 60% despite the economic sanctions. However there is no verifiable data. The Congress also declared the goal of pursuing nuclear weapons and economic construction simultaneously. However, the country is averse to opening up its economy to foreign investors.

#### **IV. SIX PARTY TALKS**

No country has advanced from a medium range capability to an ICBM in such a short span. It is believed that N.Korea could have acquired by stealth large rocket machines capable of generating 40 tons of thrust from Russia or Ukraine. North Korea opted out of the nuclear accord with us and NPT in 2002 and 2003. North Korea tested its first nuclear weapon in October, 2006 and negotiations with the US broke down. In February 2007 N.Korea reached an agreement with the Five Parties to implement the 2005 Joint Statement on denuclearization. But it conducted second nuclear test on 25 May, 2009. The Six Party Talks consisting of China, Japan, S. Korea, Russia, USA and N.Korea were suspended since 2009 after N.Korea expelled international monitors in Pyongyang and restarted its nuclear processing plan. In April 2009 a long range missile Taepo-DONG 2 / Unha -3 was unsuccessfully tested by Pyongyang. It backed out from an agreement struck in 2005 which offered it security guarantees, electricity from the South for dismantling its nuclear programme. In 2012, N.Korea violated its missile moratoria when it conducted a failed satellite launch. In February 2012 following the death of Kim Jong Il, N.Korea agreed to moratorium on nuclear tests, long range missile launches and uranium enrichment activities at the Yongbyong nuclear facility and opening its facilities for inspection by IAEA inspectors. In return Obama administration pledged 240000 metric tons of nutritional assistance. But N.Korea abandoned the deal only two months later by launching a long range rocket followed by a third nuclear test in Feb 2013. In 2003 North Korea withdrew from NPT. In 2017 North Korea conducted 24 missile tests. These included 3 ICBM's and an IRBM interim range. The Sixth nuclear test gave North Korea the capability of launching hydrogen bomb on the ICBM. The Hwasong-15 ICBM can reach Washington, D.C. The DPRK's Nodong ballistic missiles have a range of 1500 km covering South Korea and Central Japan. The Taepo Dong ballistic missile series has a range of 5600 km and can reach upto Hawaii and Northern Australia.

**Map 1: Democratic People's Republic of Korea Nuclear Facilities**



Source::Center for Non-proliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies.

Table I: Nuclear and Satellite tests

Missile	Range	Status
Scud D	700 kms	Operational
Nodong	1000 kms	Operational
Taeopodong -1	2200 kms	Full capabilities have not been demonstrated
Taeopodong X /Masudan	Never tested publicly	Never tested publicly
Taeopodong-2	6700 kms	Full capabilities have not been demonstrated
Unha-3	Never tested	Never tested

Bhatt Pooja; North Korea’s Nuclear, Ballistic Missile & Satellite Tests; Indian Council of World Affairs.

**V. ECONOMY**

North Korea has a command economy wherein the government sets the targets for production and also decides the wages to be paid. There are state owned industries and foreign investment is permitted through special economic zones. The financial

sector is completely under the control of the state. In the initial phase after the Korean War the country embarked on heavy industrialization with special emphasis on iron, steel, cement and machine tools sector. The loans and the grants were mainly from the Soviet Union, China and other socialist states. Russia supplied 880 million roubles, manpower and technology. The average industrial output of North Korea was 39% between 1953-1960. With aid from Soviet Union North Korea invested in mineral extraction heavy machinery, steel production, nuclear reactors for energy production. From 1961 to 1979 South Korea achieved rapid economic growth with per capita income rising to 17 times that of North Korea. North Korea allotted huge resources for defence which was almost 3% of its GDP in the 1960's. As economic failures deepened it could not repay its international debt. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and consequent loss of aid, Kim Jong il announced the policy of "Military First". The country became highly dependent on international aid to avoid widespread starvation since the mid 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union N.Korea experienced a 50% fall in its total industrial production. The GDP of North Korea is estimated at \$ 33.3 billion ( 2013) a rise of 1.1% over 2012. In terms of GDP per capita North Korea ranks at 194 spot with the per capita GDP of \$ 1800 according to CIA Factbook.

North Korea exports metallurgical products, minerals, armaments, textiles, agricultural and fishery products. Its exports are directed mainly to China which accounts for 63% and 27% to South Korea. It imports petroleum, cooking coal, machinery equipment, textiles, grains, agricultural products, steel from China and S.Korea. 92% of its imports are from China and S.Korea

North Korea faces food crisis. The five UNSC sanctions seek to restrict fuel imports and other trade as well as restrict North Korean citizens to work abroad. The economy is growing at the rate 1.1% of which makes it can unsustainable picture. Sanctions have resulted in a ban on North Korean exports of seafood, garments and coal. As such excess expenditure on military has affected consumer goods production in his country.

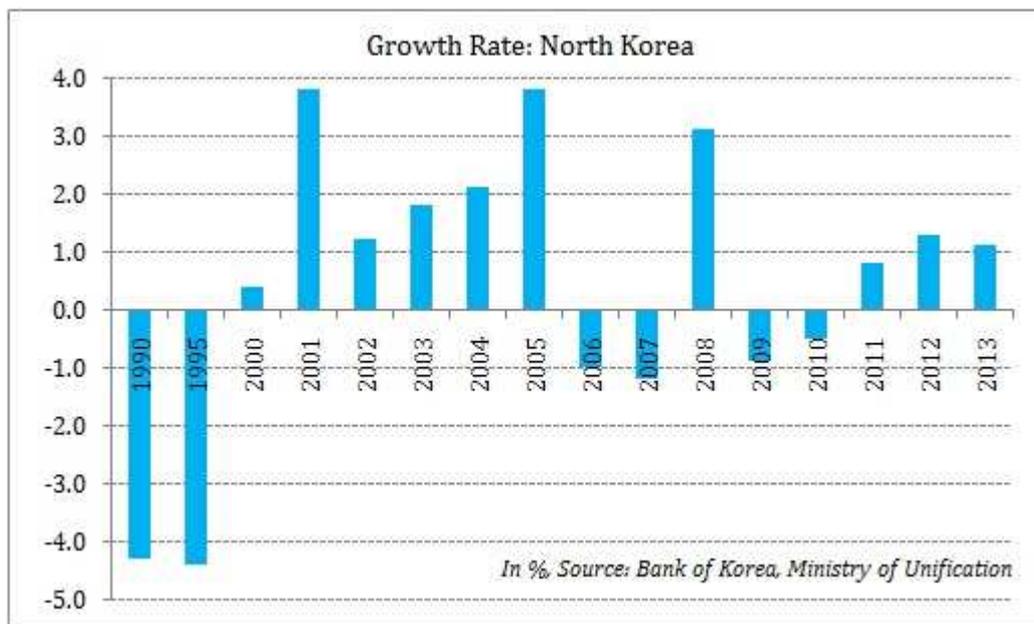
North Korea was ravaged by floods and famines in 1995 and 1996. In 1995 the country appealed to the United Nations World Food Program. Decline in food production has increased malnourishment. The UN sanctions have hit North Korea's foreign currency earnings. The unemployment rate in 2013 was 25.6%. Food assistance provided by the international community has declined since 2009. Black market economy has thrived. There are electricity shortages, lack of modern industry, shortages of spare parts. Corruption is rampant. Economic reforms can erode the monopoly of the ruling elite and also their legitimacy to rule. DPRK considers the sale of nuclear and ballistic missile technology as a means to earn foreign exchange to reserve its economy. The members of the Workers Party, military and government control companies that vie for foreign exchange.

	Former Soviet Union	China	Other Socialist States	OECD Members	Subtotal
Before 1948	53.0	-	-	-	53.0
1953-60	609.0	459.6	364.9	-	1,883.5

(Grants)	(325.0)	(287.1)	(364.9)	-	(977.0)
1961-70	558.3	157.4	159.0	9	883.7
1971-80	682.1	300.0	-	1,292.2	2,274.1
1981-90	508.4	500.0	-	-	1,008.4
Total	2,409.8	1,417.0	523.9	1,301.0	6,102.7

Source: North Korea's External Debts: Trend and Characteristics, Korea Focus (KDI Review of the North Korea Economy, March 2012, published by the Korea Development Institute)

Table III. Growth rate of North Korea



Article: How the North Korea Economy Works | Investopedia <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/013015/how-north-korea-economy-works.asp#ixzz5I5SbAH2n>

## VI. PANMUNJOM DECLARATION

The US-South Korea mutual defence treaty of 1953 states that US would defend South Korea in case it is threatened. DPRK was involved in terrorist attacks against South Korea, the bombing of Korean Air Flight 858 in 1987 and numerous attempts for assassination of South Korean President. South Korea insists on de-nuclearisation. North and South Korea relations strained with the sinking of South Korean naval vessel in March, 2010. There was also shelling across Yeonpyeong islands in the Yellow Sea in November, 2010 by North Korea. South Korea has been purchasing new early warning detection radars and high-tech reconnaissance aircraft. Panmunjom meeting took place between Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae of South Korea when they met in the demilitarized zone. Kim became the first North Korean leader to enter the South. Days preceding the meeting Kim had declared an end to testing of long range missiles and closure of nuclear test site at Punggyen as a goodwill gesture. North Korea also agreed to move to the same time zone as the South. The Panmunjom Declaration of 27 April for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of Korean peninsula

declares that there will be no more war on the Korean peninsula and a new era of peace has begun.

## **VII. CHINA**

China is considered as a key strategic ally and has to play the role of a peace maker in the region. The US had pressurized China to play the role of a mediator. China was a party to 1953 armistice agreement and considers denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as the master key for long lasting peace. China –North Korea Treaty of Friendship was signed July 11, 1961. This treaty has been extended to 2021. Articles II – VI of the treaty still guarantee Chinas role as a protector of North Korea.

Kim’s uncle Jang Seng thaek who was pro-China was executed in 2013 thereby embittering the China –North Korea ties. China wants to build a corridor till Rason port in North Korea.

In an effort to garner support Kim Jong Un visited China from 25-28 March, 2018. The US had always pressurized China to mediate in the Korean crisis. China is aware that a nuclear North Korea spills the danger of refugee crops, nuclear accident. However, estrangement of North Korea can only bring about its collapse under the pressure of sanction. It also wants to play the North Korea card in the backdrop of current US trade restrictions imposed on China. The Kim Xi meeting affirmed their strategic partnership as the only right choice in the current crisis. China wants to follow dual-track approach. Both the states have agreed to build party level contacts. China also desires cultural exchange and joint development efforts. The Chinese companies operating in North Korea and the remittances from Koreans working in logging and construction companies are a source of revenue to the North Korean regime. They are also engaged in businesses such as restaurant, tourism, interior decoration. Both China & Russia have opposed the development of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence Missile system in South Korea. Beijing is also worried about the formation of defence alliance involving US, South Korea, Japan.

## **VIII. JAPAN**

Tokyo does not have formal diplomatic relations with North Korea. Japan has imposed sanctions on North Korea since 2006 nuclear and missile tests. The abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea in 1970 & 1980s to provide language training to its intelligence agencies had been one of the irritants in the bilateral relations. Japanese government had produced list of 17 nationals abducted by North Korea in 1970s and 1980s. Japanese NGO’s estimated 470 people have been abducted by the spying agencies of North Korea. Japan had imposed travel restrictions for North Koreans visiting Japan. There were restrictions on remittance to North Korea exceeding Yen 3 million & cash taken to the country in excess of Yen 100,000 in value both of which must be reported to the Govt. There was ban on entry into Japanese ports of North Korea registered vessels for human purpose. North Korea agreed to set up a special committee to investigate the fate of Japanese nationals. So Japan agreed to lift full sanctions.

## **IX. CONCLUSION**

It was believed that the US would try to exert maximum pressure and extract guarantee for verifying and dismantling the nuclear devices. US may also insist on

moratorium on tests of nuclear devices and long range missiles. But the meeting was simply theatrics. President, Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK & Chairman Kim Jong Un agreed for complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. The US & DPRK have committed to recover POW/MZA , including immediate repatriation of more already identified. But there is no time bound programme or concrete steps. The agreement makes no mention of words “verifiable” & “irreversible”. There is no mention of lifting sanction or economic assistance. However, Trump announced immediate stoppage of US – Korea military exercises. He believes that South Korea should pay more for these joint exercise. He has also announced to reduce soldiers from South Korea. There are at present 30,000 US troops in South Korea. This can impair US – South Korea, US – Japan relations in managing the China bully. The nuclear deterrence promised to Japan becomes uncertain leaving it vulnerable. The pact with North Korea left much to be desired and falls short of the comparison with Iran’s nuclear treaty.

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