

NORTH KOREA AND SOUTH KOREA: SPIKING TENSIONS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - East Asia

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

January 23, 2024 12:15 am | Updated 07:29 am IST

COMMENTS

SHARE

READ LATER

Kim Jong-un's decision to declare South Korea as an enemy state of the North and abandon the idea of peaceful reunification signals that Pyongyang is adopting a more aggressive stand. Recent months also saw increased war rhetoric from Mr. Kim as well as a series of weapons tests by the North. Last week, [Pyongyang claimed to have fired a medium-range hypersonic missile that could travel at low altitudes](#). It has also tested underwater, unmanned, nuclear-capable drones. Earlier this month, the North fired hundreds of artillery shells near the South's islands of Yeonpyeong and Baengnyeong, closer to the Northern Limit Line, a disputed inter-Korean maritime border. It is evident from these actions that the Kim regime is seeking to alter the status quo. But Mr. Kim's actions were not entirely unprovoked. He sees the growing military convergence between South Korea, Japan, and the U.S. as a security threat. The three countries recently linked up their missile radar data with one another. The U.S. and South Korea also routinely conduct joint military exercises, which triggers sharp reactions from the North. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who assumed office in May 2022, has also maintained a hawkish stand towards Pyongyang, saying that peace can be achieved only through strength.

In the past, despite its rhetoric, North Korea was open to diplomatic engagement with the South and the U.S. In 1994, it reached the Agreed Framework with the Clinton administration. As part of this, it agreed to freeze the operation and construction of its nuclear reactors. It was after the collapse of the Agreed Framework during the George Bush Jr. administration that Pyongyang went nuclear. President Donald Trump reached out to the North, which temporarily stabilised inter-Korean ties. When the Trump initiative failed, tensions spiked again. The North's leaders, given what happened to Libya, Iraq, and the Iran nuclear agreement, have little incentive to give up their nuclear weapons for an agreement with the U.S. In an apparent rejection of the path of reconciliation with the U.S., Pyongyang has ruled out talks on denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and has taken measures to strengthen ties with China and Russia. But even a complicated diplomatic path would be preferable to a military path any day. A direct conflict between the two Koreas, one a nuclear power and the other backed by the world's most powerful country, would be disastrous for the entire region. Dialling down tensions and rebuilding confidence in inter-Korean relations should be an immediate priority for all stakeholders — Seoul, Pyongyang, and Washington.

COMMENTS

SHARE

[South Korea](#) / [North Korea](#)

[BACK TO TOP](#)

[Terms & conditions](#) | [Institutional Subscriber](#)

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com