

1. North Korea Test-Fires most Powerful Missile since 2017

Prelims Syllabus: International Relations

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's Interests, Indian diaspora.

Why in News?

- North Korea recently tested its most powerful missile since 2017, ramping up the firepower for its record-breaking seventh launch this month as Seoul warned nuclear and long-range tests could be next.

About the News:

- North Korea has never test-fired this many missiles in a calendar month before and last week threatened to abandon a nearly five-year-long self-imposed moratorium on testing long-range and nuclear weapons, blaming U.S. “hostile” policy for forcing its hand.
- With peace talks with Washington stalled, North Korea has doubled down on leader Kim Jong-un’s vow to modernise the armed forces, flexing Pyongyang’s military muscles despite biting international sanctions.
- South Korea said that North Korea could soon restart nuclear and intercontinental missile tests. North Korea “has come close to destroying the moratorium declaration”, South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in said in a statement.
- North Korea is continuing its missile program despite several UN Security Council resolutions and the international community’s calls for diplomacy and denuclearization.

Origin of Divide in Korean Peninsula:

- The present-day conflict between the US and North Korea can be traced from the Cold War between the USSR and US.
- After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the Allied forces at the Yalta Conference (1945), agreed to establish a “four-power trusteeship over Korea”.
- The fear of the spread of communism (state ownership over economic resources of a country) and the mutual distrust between the USSR and the US led to the failure of the trusteeship plan.
 - ✓ Before a concrete plan could be formulated, the USSR invaded Korea.
 - ✓ This led to a condition where the north of Korea was under the USSR and the south under the rest of the allies, mainly the US.
 - ✓ The Korean peninsula was divided into two regions by the 38th parallel.

- In 1948 the United Nations proposed free elections across all of Korea.
 - ✓ The USSR rejected this plan and the northern part was declared as Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).
 - ✓ The election took place in the American protectorate resulting in the establishment of the Republic of Korea (South Korea).
- Both North Korea and South Korea tried to enhance their reach, territorially and ideologically, which gave birth to the Korean Conflict.



About the Korean War:

- On 25th June 1950, North Korea, backed by the USSR, launched an attack on South Korea and occupied most of the country.
 - ✓ In response, the United Nations force led by the US retaliated.
- In 1951 the US forces led by Douglas MacArthur crossed the 38th parallel and triggered the entry of China in support of North Korea.
 - ✓ To prevent further escalation, peace talks began later in 1951.
- India was actively involved in negotiating peace in the Korean peninsula by engaging all the major stakeholders – US, USSR and China.
 - ✓ In 1952, the Indian resolution on Korea was adopted at the United Nations (UN).
- On 27th July 1953, the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed between the UN Command, the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. It led to an official ceasefire without a Peace treaty. Thus, the war officially never ended.

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- This also led to the establishment of the Korean Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) – a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula to serve as a buffer zone between North Korea and South Korea.
 - In December 1991, North and South Korea signed a pact agreeing to refrain from Aggression.

About the US-North Korea Conflict:

- During the Cold War era, (allegedly with the support of Russia and China) North Korea accelerated its nuclear programme and developed nuclear capabilities.
 - ✓ During the same time, the US extended its Nuclear Umbrella (guarantee of support during a nuclear attack) to its allies i.e South Korea and Japan.
- North Korea withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003 and afterwards, under present leader Kim Jong-un, it increased nuclear missile testing.
 - ✓ North Korea is barred from testing ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons under international law.
- In response to this, the US started deploying THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) in South Korea in March 2017.
- The territorial conflict which started between North and South Korea has transformed into a tussle between the US and North Korea.
- Following the failure of diplomatic efforts to improve relations with North Korea, the US has imposed sanctions.

What is India's Stand?

- India has consistently voiced its opposition to North Korean nuclear and missile tests. However, it has maintained a neutral stance Regarding Sanctions.