

North Korea - An Aggressor or A Victim of Cold-War between the Super Powers (US, China & Russia) – A Critical Review

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Abstract— Apparently, China has been encouraging South Korea and US to have a dialogue with North Korea and resolve the conflict. Consequently, the preparations are under way to bring senior North Korean officials to the United States for talks with former US officials. North Korea has been put under various sanctions for "half a century" now but the communist state is surviving by placing an emphasis on "self-sufficiency". North Korea is hostile to the US as the latter is overtly supporting South Korea in its war with North Korea. As Russia and China have soft corner with North Korea, they also have sounded that too much of US intervention in the region may force Beijing and Moscow to deploy their own joint missile defense system. There is another bone of contention between China and the US is the claim of China over South China Sea. While Russia has supported the Chinese claims (over South China Sea), the United States, though has no territorial claims in the region, but has supported the claim by Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Philippines. Consequently, keeping in mind the strategic importance of the region and also with a view to keep Russia and China under continuous check, US has firmly installed its military and naval base in South Korea and has taken the responsibility of latter's defense from North Korean and their ally's probable military attack. Had these Super-powers (US, Russia, China) sincerely desired, would have resolved the Korean Conflict long back through diplomatic efforts alone. But it seems that dragging their feet on the issue and continuing with their military presence in the region, on some or other pretext, suits more in the schemes of the things of these Super Powers.

Keywords— North Korea, Nuclear Program, Economic Sanctions, South China Sea, Territorial claims.

I. INTRODUCTION

On the one hand China is being criticized by the west for not doing enough to pressure North Korea to drop its nuclear program, on the other hand China blames that the root cause of North Korean missile program is its friction with the United States and South Korea. Apparently, China has been encouraging South Korea and US to have a dialogue with North Korea and resolve the conflict. Consequently, the preparations are under way to bring senior North Korean officials to the United States for talks with former US officials.

North Korea has been put under various sanctions for "half a century" now but the communist state is surviving by placing an emphasis on "self-sufficiency". North Korea is hostile to the US as the latter is overtly supporting South Korea in its war with North Korea. Consequently, North Korea has likely mastered the technology to power the different stages of an ICBM (Inter Continental Ballistic

Missiles) and may show it off soon, but is likely still a long way from being able to hit the mainland United States. As Russia and China have soft corner with North Korea, they have sounded that too much of US intervention in the region may force Beijing and Moscow to deploy their own joint missile defense system. There is another bone of contention between China and the US is the claim of China over South China Sea through which roughly \$5 trillion in trade passes annually. Most of the South China Sea is claimed by China, though there are overlapping claims by Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines. While Russia has supported the Chinese claims over South China Sea, the United States (though has no territorial claims in the region, but supports the claim by Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Philippines. Consequently, keeping in mind the strategic importance of the region and also with a view to keep Russia and China under continuous check, US has firmly installed its military and naval base in South Korea and has taken the responsibility of its defense from North Korean and their ally's probable military aggression. Had these Super-powers (US, Russia, China) desired, would have resolved the Korean Conflict long back through diplomatic efforts. But dragging their feet on the issue and continuing with their military presence in the region, on some or other pretext, suits more in the schemes of the things of these Super Powers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(1) "China blames Washington & Seoul for North Korea missile launch", *China, facing* (2017): criticism that it is not doing enough to pressure North Korea to drop its nuclear program, said on Monday (13th Feb., 2017) that the root cause of North Korean missile launches is friction with the United States and South Korea. North Korea fired a banned ballistic missile on Sunday (12th Feb, 2017), its first test since US President Donald Trump took office. The missile, launched as Trump hosted Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Florida, is believed to have flown about 500 kilometers (300 miles) before splashing down in international waters.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China opposed the launch, which violated UN Security Council resolutions that call for an end to North Korea's nuclear and missile tests. China is North Korea's largest source of trade and aid, and Trump has complained that Beijing is not doing enough to pressure it. Beijing counters that its influence is overstated and suggests that Washington's refusal to talk directly to North Korea is impeding progress toward a

solution. He added that China has long been encouraging Seoul and Washington to have a dialogue with North Korea. The root cause of the (North Korea) nuclear missile issue is its differences with the U.S. and South Korea," Geng told reporters at a regular briefing.

Geng said China, a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, has been 'completely and comprehensively' implementing Security Council resolutions on the nuclear issue. He said Beijing "has been striving for a settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue by proactively engaging in mediation and promoting peace talks. Geng urged all sides to refrain from provocative action and said China would continue

(2) *"Washington prepares to bring North Koreans to US for talks (2017):* Preparations are under way to bring senior North Korean officials to the United States for talks with former US officials, the first such meeting in more than five years, The Washington Post reported on Sunday (12th Feb, 2017). The talks would be the clearest indication yet that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un wants to communicate with the new Trump administration. Planning for the "Track 1.5 talks" is still in a preparatory stage, the Post reported, citing multiple people with knowledge of the arrangements. That name, reflecting planned contact between former US officials and current North Korean ones, is a reference to what are known as "Track 2" talks involving former officials on both sides. The US State Department has not yet approved the North Koreans' visas for the talks, the newspaper said. A State Department spokesman commented to Reuters only that Track 2 meetings "routinely" take place on a variety of topics around the world and occur independent of the U.S. government.

A White House official commented that the US government had no plans to meet with North Korea. North Korea's testing of an intermediate-range ballistic missile drew international condemnation last week. President Donald Trump told a news conference after the test: Obviously North Korea is a big, big problem and we will deal with that very strongly."

(3) *North Korea missiles 'drill for strike on US bases (2017):* Nuclear-armed North Korea's launch of four missiles was a training exercise for a strike on US bases in Japan and supervised by leader Kim Jong-Un, Pyongyang's state media said. Three of the four missiles came down provocatively close to US ally Japan, in waters that are part of its exclusive economic zone, representing a challenge to US President Donald Trump. Washington and Tokyo have sought an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss the launch, likely to be scheduled for Tuesday (14th Feb, 2017).

Under UN resolutions, Pyongyang is barred from any use of ballistic missile technology, and the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, said on Twitter that the world "won't allow" North Korea to continue on its "destructive path". But six sets of UN sanctions since its first nuclear test in 2006 have failed to halt its drive for what it insists are defensive weapons. Kim Jong-Un gave the order for the drill to start, the North's official Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. "Feasting his eyes on the trails of ballistic rockets", he praised the Hwasong artillery unit that carried it out, it said. "The four ballistic rockets launched simultaneously are so accurate that

they look like acrobatic flying corps in formation, he said," the agency added, referring to Kim.

The military units involved are "tasked to strike the bases of the US imperialist aggressor forces in Japan in contingency", KCNA said. But a US defence official told AFP that North Korea had launched five extended-range Scud missiles yesterday, with one crashing somewhere over the Korean peninsula. Seoul and Washington last week began annual joint military exercises that always infuriate Pyongyang. Kim Jong-Un ordered his military "to keep highly alert as required by the grim situation in which an actual war may break out anytime", KCNA reported, and to be ready to "open fire to annihilate the enemies" when ordered. Pyongyang regularly issues threats against its enemies, and carried out two atomic tests and a series of missile launches last year, but yesterday was only the second time its devices have come down in Japan's EEZ. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told parliament: "This clearly shows North Korea has entered a new stage of threat," adding: "We can never tolerate this." The launches came ahead of a trip by new US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to the region

(4) *Stephanie Nebehay (2017):* North Korea has nothing to fear from any U.S. move to broaden sanctions aimed at cutting it off from the global financial system and will pursue "acceleration" of its nuclear and missile programs, a North Korean envoy told Reuters on 21.3.2017, Tuesday. This includes developing a "pre-emptive first strike capability" and an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM), said Choe Myong Nam, deputy ambassador at the North Korean mission to the United Nations in Geneva.

Reuters, quoting a senior U.S. official in Washington, reported on Monday that the Trump administration is considering sweeping sanctions as part of a broad review of measures to counter North Korea's nuclear and missile threat. "I think this is stemming from the visit by the Secretary of State (Rex Tillerson) to Japan, South Korea and China... We of course are not afraid of any act like that," Choe told Reuters. "Even prohibition of the international transactions system, the global financial system, this kind of thing is part of their system that will not frighten us or make any difference." He called existing sanctions "heinous and inhumane". North Korea has been under sanctions for "half a century" but the communist state survives by placing an emphasis on "self-sufficiency", he said. His country wants a forum set up to examine the "legality and legitimacy of the sanctions regime".

He denounced joint annual military exercises currently being carried out by the United States and South Korea on the divided peninsula and criticized remarks by Tillerson during his talks with regional allies last week. "All he was talking about is for the United States to take military actions on DPRK," Choe said, using the acronym for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. North Korea rejects claims by Washington and Seoul that the military drills are defensive. They involve strategic nuclear bombers and a nuclear submarine, Columbus, that recently entered South Korean ports, he said.

"In the light of such huge military forces involved in the joint military exercises, we have no other choice but to

continue with our full acceleration of the nuclear programs and missile programs. It is because of these hostile activities on the part of the United States and South Korea." "We strengthen our national defense capability as well as pre-emptive strike capabilities with nuclear forces as a centerpiece," Choe said. Asked to comment on Choe's remarks, a U.S. State Department spokeswoman, Anna Richey-Allen, called on North Korea "to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric and to make the strategic choice to fulfill its international obligations and commitments and return to serious talks."

Choe declined to give technical details of North Korea's latest rocket engine test on Sunday - seen as a possible prelude to a partial ICBM flight - calling it a great historical event that would lead to "fruitful outcomes". "I can tell you for sure that the inter-continental ballistic rockets of the DPRK will be launched at any time and at any place as decided by our Supreme Leadership," Choe said, recalling leader Kim Jong Un's pledge in a New Year's address.

Analysts say North Korea has likely mastered the technology to power the different stages of an ICBM and may show it off soon, but is likely still a long way from being able to hit the mainland United States. "The United States has been talking about launching pre-emptive strikes at North Korea," Choe said. "And we have been prepared to deter, to counter-attack such attacks on the part of the United States. "We would utilize every possible means in our hands and the inter-continental ballistic rocket is one of them."

(5) *"North Korea: Rogue Aggressor or Cornered Victim of Aggression"*(2016): North Korean officials and state media are well-known for their bombastic rhetoric and threats to 'wipe out their enemies', while conducting a series of nuclear and ballistic missile tests condemned by the international community, Russia included. But once in a while, Pyongyang manages to offer a somewhat reasonable explanation for their behavior. North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho's speech before the United Nations General Assembly on Friday may have been such an occasion. During his speech, Ri stated bluntly that Pyongyang would continue to build up its nuclear arsenal to deter against threats, including US nuclear weapons and conventional US and South Korean military forces, which regularly engage in 'provocative' military exercises along North Korea's borders. "The acquisition of a nuclear arsenal is the policy of our state," the diplomat bluntly admitted. "As long as a nuclear-armed state exists that has hostile relations with our country, our national security and peace on the Korean peninsula can be defended only with reliable nuclear deterrence," Ri added. At the same time, the diplomat stressed that his country "is doing everything to prevent armed conflict and its escalation, taking countermeasures for self-defense when met with aggressive US exercises by the US and South Korea."

"Our decision to strengthen our nuclear arsenal is a justified measure of self-defense to protect our nation from the constant nuclear threat posed by the United States," Ri said. Finally, justifying North Korea's intensification of missile and nuclear testing in recent weeks and months, the official suggested that the "successful test of a nuclear warhead

carried out recently is part of the practical countermeasures against threats and sanctions - to the hostile sanctions of the United States." North Korean officials and the country's state media are well-known for making loud, aggressive statements. For instance, in response to recent reports that South Korea was creating a special military unit capable of decapitating the North Korean leadership, Pyongyang announced that it might just respond by loading a hydrogen bomb into an artillery piece and dropping it on Seoul. The country makes such threats on a regular basis, perhaps feeling that this was the only way for it to get the attention of their opponents. But for Russia, it is Pyongyang's nuclear and missile testing, leading to the inevitable beefing up of the US presence on the Korean peninsula, which causes infinitely more concern.

(6) *"US Trying to reassure Beijing that south Korea Missile Defense is not a threat to them"*(2016): Moving forward with its controversial plans to install the THAAD missile system in South Korea, the United States has reiterated assurances that it is not meant as a threat to Beijing. In recent months, North Korea has carried out a series of nuclear missile tests. In January, the isolated nation conducted its fourth nuclear test and now claims to be in possession of an atomic weapon. This was followed by a satellite launch and a series of ballistic missile tests, resulting in harsh new sanctions implemented by the United Nations. The United States and South Korea have cited these events as justification for installing a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) unit on the peninsula. While this has been criticized as a provocation by both China and Russia, the US maintains the system is purely defensive.

On Tuesday, Mark Milley, Chief of Staff of the US Army, reiterated this claim. "[THAAD] is a defensive measure to protect South Koreans and Americans from the North Korean ballistic missile threat and is not a threat in any way to China," the Army said in a statement released by the US Embassy in Beijing. China and Russia have both issued warnings that the THAAD system will not only escalate tensions on the peninsula, but also puts their own national security at risk. "Such actions by the US and South Korea do not correspond to their stated goals and threaten to deal serious damage to the strategic security of neighboring countries, including China and Russia, and worsen the situation in the country," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement last month. Speaking to Sputnik, military expert Vladimir Yevseyev suggested that Beijing and Moscow may be forced to deploy their own joint missile defense system. "China has radar stations that can be deployed as an early warning system for any missile attack. Russia, of course, also has such stations of various types. Among the latest radar early warning systems is the Voronezh-M and Voronezh-DM," Yevseyev said. "As the next step, it may be possible to conduct joint exercises in the Russian Ashuluk range. China, in turn, has combat lasers that are able to influence the objects in the near space." On Tuesday, Milley addressed tensions in the South China Sea, where Beijing has expressed frustration with Washington's ongoing "freedom of navigation" patrols within the 12-mile territorial limit of China's land reclamation projects. Milley "reaffirmed the US commitment to adhere to international rules and standards and encouraged the Chinese to do the

same as a way to reduce regional tensions," the statement reads, adding that the US wants to keep communication channels with China open to "reduce the risk of crisis or miscalculation and candidly address differences." A highly-contested region through which roughly \$5 trillion in trade passes annually, most of the South China Sea is claimed by China, though there are overlapping claims by Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The United States has no territorial claims in the region.

III. FINDINGS

- On the one hand China is criticized for not doing enough to pressure North Korea to drop its nuclear program, on the other hand China blames that the root cause of North Korean missile launches is friction with the United States and South Korea. China has been encouraging South Korea and US to have a dialogue with North Korea. The root cause of North Korean nuclear missile program is its differences with the US and the South Korea. Preparations are under way to bring senior North Korean officials to the United States for talks with former US officials, Nuclear-armed North Korea's recent launch of four missiles was a training exercise for a strike on US bases in Japan and supervised by leader Kim Jong-Un.
- North Korean envoy told Reuters on 21.3.2017 that North Korea has nothing to fear from any U.S. move to broaden sanctions aimed at cutting it off from the global financial system and will pursue "acceleration" of its nuclear and missile programs, a. North Korea has been under sanctions for "half a century" but the communist state survives by placing an emphasis on "self-sufficiency", he said. His country wants a forum set up to examine the "legality and legitimacy of the sanctions regime". North Korea has likely mastered the technology to power the different stages of an ICBM and may show it off soon, but is likely still a long way from being able to hit the mainland United States
- For Russia, it is Pyongyang's nuclear and missile testing, leading to the inevitable beefing up of the US presence on the Korean peninsula, which causes infinitely more concern. Ultimately, Moscow's only promising avenue of approach to resolving tensions on the Korean peninsula is the resumption of the six-party talks on North Korea's denuclearization. However, for this to occur, Moscow and Beijing must be able to convince their American, Japanese and South Korean partners that Pyongyang's saber-rattling stems from genuine fears of the conventional and nuclear threats posed by the US and its allies.
- Moving forward with its controversial plans to install the THAAD missile system in South Korea, the United States has reiterated assurances that it is not meant as a threat to Beijing. In recent months, North Korea has carried out a series of nuclear missile tests. The United States and South Korea have cited these events as justification for installing a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) unit on the peninsula. While this has been criticized as a provocation by both China and Russia, the

US maintains the system is purely defensive. On Tuesday, Mark Milley, Chief of Staff of the US Army, reiterated this claim. "[THAAD] is a defensive measure to protect South Koreans and Americans from the North Korean ballistic missile threat and is not a threat in any way to China," the Army said in a statement released by the US Embassy in Beijing.

- Such actions by the US and South Korea do not correspond to their stated goals and threaten to deal serious damage to the strategic security of neighboring countries, including China and Russia, and worsen the situation in the country," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement last month. Speaking to Sputnik, military expert Vladimir Yevseyev suggested that Beijing and Moscow may be forced to deploy their own joint missile defense system. A highly-contested region through which roughly \$5 trillion in trade passes annually, most of the South China Sea is claimed by China, though there are overlapping claims by Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The United States has no territorial claims in the region.

IV. CONCLUSION

- There is a blame game going on for around five decades now between the Super-Powers having keen interest in the region. On the one hand China is criticized by the US for not doing enough to pressure North Korea to drop its nuclear program, on the other hand China blames that joint military exercises by the South Korea and US in the region is the root cause of North Korean missile program.
- As for the US, it has been there in South Korea for almost five decades now. US has its own interests to remain in the region from the strategic point of view. On the one hand South Korea is its one of its oldest allies in the region and in the name of protecting it from the North Korean aggression it is exploiting its resources either by selling weapons, war-technology or by deploying contingent of armed personnel and establishing the naval base with fighter-plane carrier along its coastline. US has also installed THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) to protect South Koreans from the North Korean ballistic missile threat. The Idea behind installing THAAD to covertly send a message to Russia and China to behave while secretly helping North Korea in its missile program. But US has overtly declared that THAAD is a defensive measure to protect South Koreans and Americans from the North Korean ballistic missile threat and is not a threat in any way to China.
- When it comes to China, North Korea is its Trade Partner and China has a soft corner with it. Time and again, China is also criticized for covertly assisting North Korea in its nuclear missile programs. Hence, China is milking North Korean resources through Trades or by providing it arsenal or war-technology. China has, however, been encouraging South Korea and US to resolve the conflict with North Korea through dialogue. China has another kind of friction with countries surrounding South China

Sea. It wants to have its sole control over south China Sea and therefore fiercely facing opposition from the countries like Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines. While Russia has been on China's side on the issue, US has taken the opposite stand, and disputing the china's claim over south china sea. Moreover, there is another dispute going on between china and Japan. Each side is claiming its control over a few Islands in the region. Japan has been a US ally after World War-II and, hence, in case of any military aggression in the region, US would surely throw its weight behind Japan and other surrounding countries against China. Therefore, from the military and strategic point of view, the US sees a big and potential market for its arsenal. Moreover, south china sea is stated to have a huge reserve of oil and gas. Hence, China, Russia and US wants to have the biggest chunk of their share in the region.

- Therefore, the whole region has been divided into two factions; on the one side is North Korea with its supporters, Russia and China. On the other side is South Korea being protected and supported by US and Japan. Hence, at times it looks like that Korean Peninsula has become the battle field of the cold war between the giants like Russia and China on one side and US and Japan on the other side.
- Had these Super-powers (US, Russia, China) sincerely desired, could have resolved the Korean Conflict long back through diplomatic efforts alone. But it seems that dragging their feet on the issue, on some or other pretext, suits more in the schemes of the things of these Nations. This kind of approach allows them to continuing with their military presence in the region and keep a watch on the activities of each other.

- During the World War –II also there was no need to drop nuclear bomb over Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the Japan had exhausted and could have been forced to surrender in next 10-15 days by conventional bombings alone. But on the one hand US wanted to experiment and see the impact of newly invented nuclear war-head and on the other hand wanted to send right and desired signals to Russia and China, in the aftermath of the war. Hence, US dropped nuclear bombs on these two Japanese cities so as to establish its supremacy and dominance over its formidable rivals. US may therefore repeat the history and suitably punish North Korea by military strikes so as to once again establish its dominance against its old rivals – China & Russia.
- Hence, having gone through the above paragraph, every reader of this article can draw an inference whether North Korea is really an aggressor or a poor or cornered victim of the cold-war between these super-powers.

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