



## North Korea's Beijing Engagement

### What is the issue?

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- After a long and tense phase of political bickering, a detente is being reached between the west and the North Korean leadership.
- In this backdrop, North Korean Supreme leader Kim Jong-Un recently undertook his maiden foreign diplomatic trip to Beijing.

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### How has China - North Korea ties evolved over time?

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- **Historically** - China has historically played a role in inter-Korean relations.
- In 2000, Mr. Kim's father and predecessor, Kim Jong-il, had visited China shortly before a summit with South Korea.
- In 2003, China launched the Six-Party Talks aimed at peacefully resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis, which eventually failed.
- **The strain** - China had been under pressure from the west for long to exercise its influence to curtail North Korea's nuclear program.
- Beijing too wasn't happy with Mr. Kim's conduct and had supported the stringent UN sanctions on North Korea, which crippled North Korean trade.
- Its coal exports of coal, seafood and other goods to China were hit and the friendship with China came under severe strain.

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## **What are the implications of the current visit?**

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  - North Korean leader Kim Jong-un recently travelled by train to Beijing, which marks his first foreign trip after assuming power in 2011.
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  - The visit has helped repair the strain that had developed lately between Beijing and Pyongyang over erratic nuclear tests by the latter.
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  - He held talks with Chinese President Xi and re-emphasised his commitment to de-nuclearise - thereby clearly inviting China into the current negotiations.
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  - Notably, a peace summit has been scheduled with South Korean President Moon and the subsequent one is slated with the US president Trump.
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  - This visit has send out a clear message that Mr. Kim is serious about his offer for talks.
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## **What are the areas of convergence?**

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  - Mr. Kim's visit to Beijing has reinstated China's central role in talks over the Korean crisis, which both countries see as mutually beneficial
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  - For the Kim regime, China's experience and guidance could come in handy when it is preparing to engage with two of its biggest rivals.
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  - For China, this presents an opportunity to get proactive as a global power house in resolving international disputes.
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  - Also, if Mr. Kim's fundamental concern is the survival of its regime, then China too has a major stake in North Korea's view point (South Korea is an US ally).
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## **What are the challenges for peace?**

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- There are still considerable challenges due to the unreliability of the Trump administration in towing its commitments.

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- If the US – North Korea summit fails, there will be a return to a high tension situation, which is undesirable and dangerous for all.

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- As the context is volatile, multilateral intervention would help in sustaining the talks and China could possibly play facilitator to balance demands.

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**Source: The Hindu**

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