

North Korean nuclear program and Six Party Talks: A critical analysis

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Abstract

North Korea is an important figure in Northeast Asian politics due to its growing nuclear program which she claims to have initiated for defence. However, it has disturbed the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula at large. The tense relations over the years between U.S., its regional allies particularly South Korea and North Korea have affected world politics. Breakdown of the Agreed Framework Agreement of 1994, signed between U.S. and North Korea in 2002, caused a damage to their relationship. Six Party Talks were started to bring stability to region and political certainty among the relations of the stakeholders. However, SPT failed to achieve the desired objectives due to the ambitious interests of the member states. This research paper focuses those obstacles that led to breakdown of the six-party talks. Furthermore, the study addresses the question that how U.S., China and other regional states are handling and exploiting the North Korean nuclear issue for the vested interests. This qualitative study has used secondary sources for data collection and for the analysis it used descriptive-analytical and narrative analysis technique. The study shows that failure and suspension of the SPT have some serious implications on the security of Northeast Asia.

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1. Introduction

Due to its strategic and political importance, far East Asia has remained a hot spot region that has experienced decades of tussles and hostility due to factors like North-South historical and ideological conflicts as well as the involvement of major powers in the internal affairs of the region since Second World War. The nuclear program of North Korea has badly disturbed not only the political conditions of Far East Asia but has also threatened the security and peace of the region. Different scholars and regional experts have critically discussed and analysed the different aspects related to the North Korean nuclear issue. After comprehensive study of the issue through its existing available literature, there is a need felt to inspect and analyse the reasons which have blocked the way forwards towards a successive negotiation. The nuclear program of Pyongyang has always got immense importance in world politics due to its vulnerable strategic consequences (Lee, 2008). The nuclear and missile program of North Korea has threatened not only the security of this particular region but also endangered the peace of the whole world. U.S. blame the DPRK to which the earlier agreement known as “Agreed Framework Agreement” was failed (Calamur, 2017).

The U.S. and North Korea have signed the “Agreed Framework Agreement” in 1994, which main goals were to dismantle the North Korean nuclear program, create peaceful environment in the region and to compensate North Korea in response. Through that “Agreed Framework Agreement” US has also ensured North Korea that Washington will provide fuel, ease sanctions and will help Pyongyang to build “light-water Nuclear Reactors” for peaceful purpose. The same Agreement has been failed in getting the desired goals and objectives. According to some experts the “Agreed Framework Agreement” failed due to lack of trust and mainly due to U.S. delay in proving its promises, while on the other hand some experts have also blamed the role of the DPRK due to her aggressive nature and continuation of its missiles and nuclear program even after the acceptance of the terms of the agreement. In January 2003, North Korean leader Kim Jong IL announced that his country will withdraw from NPT which it had agreed back in 1985. After such aggressive statement, China realized that now it is need of the hour to start efforts for dialogue and to avoid any military adventure in the region. Chinese leadership succeeded through diplomacy to arrange the first official meeting of “Six Party Talks (SPT)” at Beijing which also includes US, China, North Korea, Japan, South Korea and Russian leaders. The SPT thus became the first ever multinational talks on the issue of nuclear proliferation of Korean Peninsula, which Beijing had ever hosted in the history (Zhang & Han, 2013).

During the period from 2003 to 2009, six different rounds of talks were held, however there were some obstacles which have permanently halted the efforts towards a peaceful deal between the stockholders. According to scholars, North Korean and U.S. approach towards the SPT actually hit by their mutual misunderstanding and egoism. Both states have never tried to implement the “Term of Agreements (ToRs)” in its true sense. The U.S. opted for a denuclearization as soon as possible while North Korea has always opted for economic aid, security guarantee and support through easing of harsh economic sanctions first. The DPRK main interest was to keep and secure her nuclear nukes to counter any U.S. pre-emptive strike and thus this became a permanent hurdle in the continuation of the SPT (You, 2005). It is very clear that lack of trust between concerned parties as well as other participant have deeply influenced the whole rounds of SPT (Robinson, 2018). One more factor in this regard contributed that China the closest ally, never forced the North Korean leaderships to stop their aggressive stance in official meetings (2003-2009). On the other hand, country like Japan was

willing to sort out her issue of abductees and therefore tried her best to get some positive outcomes. Apart from this the most important challenge for all other states during these talks were to make sure and implement all the promises and agreements they made with North Korea (Robinson, 2018). Both North Korea and U.S. did not show the ability to overcome those weaknesses which became the cause of failure of the earlier Agreed Framework Agreement. Contrary to this, China always concentrated more on to avoid war while considered DPRK denuclearization as a secondary goal (You, 2005).

Apart from these issue, North Korea considered the US presence in the Korean Peninsula as a real threat to her security. The US-Seoul military exercises and the installation of “THAAD” missile system has been strongly opposed by the North Koreans and thus their leadership has started to criticize the role of US and South Korea as aggressive and against Pyongyang security. The Two Koreas’ border skirmishes and tensions also didn’t let the peace dialogues and negotiations to continue successfully. In fact, some needed practical measures were not adopted by the participants which could have normalize the situation towards a deal. The DPRK remained hostile and continue her nuclear program during the SPT as she conducted her first nuclear test in October 2006 which resulted in the abandoning of peace talks and in retaliation more economic sanctions were imposed on North Korea. There is also some skepticism that the continued and persistent North Korean efforts for advancing her nuclear program can also create threats for other regional states like South Korea, Japan as well as Taiwan and thus they would also like to re-examine and reconsider their current non-nuclear status (Harnisch, 2002). The SPT are still suspended since 2009, after North Korea conducted another nuclear test.

2. Literature review

Sook (2013) has argued that the suspension of the SPT since 2008 had harsh consequences as the one had been experienced on February 12, 2013, when Pyongyang had conducted its third nuclear test. He stressed on the resumption of the SPT while analysing the position of all states member who are member to SPT. He has pointed out that due to “relative gains” concerns of the member’s states the SPT have been on stalled position. According to him this scenario is the real cause of the failure of the SPT and thus the implementation of earlier agreements during these talks are a serious matter of concern. He has argued that stringent economic sanctions on Pyongyang as well as a clear focus on a verified denuclearization shall be required. For this purpose, the role of Moscow and Beijing will be important.

Lim (2018) has highlighted the U.S. previous foreign policy failure in keeping relation with North Korea. He has stated that U.S. has historically failed to adopt a prominent strategy towards North Korea and that’s why U.S. failed to stop Pyongyang from its aggressive stance on getting nuclear nukes. He has further argued that Firstly US has failed to understand about the basic motive of North Korea behind its nuclear program. Secondly, Washington also failed to understand the external complexity around Pyongyang issue (a so called as N-player problem) and lastly, he has argued that U.S. mainly failed to make a good foreign policy strategy towards North Korea mainly due deepened lack of trust which always resulted in a credible commitment problem.

Mastro (2018) has examined that China has a number of concerns regarding North Korean nuclear issue and especially to the stability of the Korean Peninsula. China will not remain silent if a war broke out on the Korean Peninsula and thus China will intervene militarily. In

this case, Chinese main focus will be security the nuclear installations of North Korea as well as she will try to stop Pyongyang from using of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, in the area of WMD-C3D mission, China has no doubt expressed and shown her willingness to not only work with IAEA but also with US to get success in the area of non-proliferation and dismantling of nuclear weapons. However, China will ask and demand for greater influence on Korean Peninsula at the expense of Washington and her regional allies.

McEachern (2018) has stated that Kim Jong-Un has focused on the power and is practicing a centralized political institutional system for the regime stability and governance. His regime is backed by a single party which has got and grown the power during his tenure in power. He is leading by his personal ability which is not bounded to any institution or individual. McEachern further argues that personalism and a single-party rule and governance are the keys for the stability of any regime. In case of North Korea, he has stated that Pyongyang has the ability to make use of these two elements of personalist or single party typologies, which will give their leadership permanency well beyond the average duration as compared to other personalist or single party regimes

3. Theoretical framework

Realism can best explain this situation where no party is ready to trust other. Each state is trying to ensure its security by maximizing its military power. Pyongyang started its nuclear program for its security against the western threat but now that nuclear program has halted the political and economic prosperity of the region. The U.S. has taken this phenomenon as challenge to its hegemonic status and national interests. For this purpose, U.S. is misusing the concept of international norms, legality, morality and liberalism. Pyongyang sees this “crocodile tears” and nothing else. The anarchic nature of global politics gives the global powers to establish and maintain the system according to their requirement. Same are happening in East Asia where U.S., China and Russia are trying to counter each other’s influence and status quo. China is busy in improving its regional influence in this region by handling the nuclear program of North Korea according to her national interest. On the other hand, U.S. is exploiting this nuclear program of North Korea through its regional hegemonic policies. It’s like a tug of war situation between superpowers in this region and thus the nuclear program of North Korean remains their main area of interests. As discussed earlier anarchic world give states the rights to maximize their area of influence, Thus, all the states who are member of the SPT are struggling to improve their sphere of influence in the region and therefore power struggle is disturbing the peace of the region.

4. Research methodology

This study is based on a descriptive, exploratory and qualitative research methodology. The descriptive and narrative analysis techniques have been used to analyse the existing primary data related documents and other available literature and thus to reach desired goal of a qualitative study. Nonetheless, multiple latest sources have been consulted in order to get an in-depth understandings and conceptual underpinning. The methodology applied in this research is secondary in nature as most of the data have been gathered from secondary sources that involve journal articles, research work, opinions and speeches as well as recorded interviews of the government officials, newspapers and websites. The authors have tried their best to consult articles written and opinions expressed by those who experts in the area and have candid views on the topic.

5. Six Party Talks (SPT): Analysis and discussion

The North Korean's nuclear program has always been a threat for the security and peace of Northeast Asia. After the division of Korean Peninsula due to the mutual rivalry between two different mind sets and two opposing political theories of Capitalism and Communism has never let both Koreas to unify again. North Korea has initiated its nuclear weapons program in the year 1955, when its leader decided to establish a nuclear institute (Jeong, 2012). This institute has started to work on Plutonium later on in 1975. North Korean leaders have experienced western support to the South before and during the Korean wars, which had diverted the minds of its leadership towards the national security rather than economic developments after the Armistice Agreement. The mutual rivalry between South Korea and North Korea has never let Pyongyang to focus on economic and political developments. On the other hand, US military presence in the region has further threatened Pyongyang to take some bold steps for getting nuclear capabilities in order to avoid any pre-emptive attack. Although both China and Russia had supported Pyongyang during the Korean wars however their security guarantee was always considered as under doubts by Pyongyang. North Korea being a close ally of China at that time had also defied Beijing by initiating its nuclear program. China has always considered North Korean nuclear struggle as a great hurdle for Chinese interests (Perlez, 2017).

The Korean "Armistice Agreement" was signed to halt further tensions between the traditional rivals North Korea and South Korea and thus the Korean Peninsula was divided along the 38th parallel between both the Koreas. When the Korean war was over, both the U.S. and South Korea had started to establish their alliance politically and in the field of security as well which had completed almost over five decades time (Pan, 2006). Pyongyang has considered U.S. military presence in the region as a direct threat to her security. According to some experts Pyongyang initiated its efforts towards getting nuclear weapons keeping in view the internal regional U.S. military presence in the region. The historical rivalry and permanent US back up during the Korean wars had forced the leaderships at Pyongyang to focus on military advancement rather to work for economic progress. Keeping in mind all the threats perceptions Pyongyang had thus initiated its efforts for nuclear technology. North Korea in 1959 at Yongbyon initiated efforts to establish its first nuclear Scientific Research Centre with the support of USSR (Ying, 2017).

Though, some of the regional experts had argued that USSR at that stage did not extend its help or support to provide Pyongyang Uranium or plutonium enrichment technology. The first nuclear crises on Korean Peninsula begin in 1993 and the same was diffused by signing an agreement known as "Agreed Framework Agreement" of 1994 between US and North Korea. The "Agreed Framework Agreement" became useless after both US and North Korea failed to follow and implement the agreement in its true spirit and thus both states started to blame each other for violations of the terms of the agreement. Since then, Beijing was in extreme pressure by the international community to play its leading role in bringing Pyongyang towards negotiations. In 2002 China started her efforts to arrange a multilateral dialogue between all regional states. After North Korean engagement to restart her nuclear program in October 2002, the Chinese leadership was under extreme pressure to take steps towards the peaceful solution of the issue. To ease this pressure Chinese leadership, get succeeded in arranging a three- way dialogue in April 2003 and later the same was exceeded to a multilateral talk which is also known as "Six Party talks" which included Russia, China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan and United States. After arranging bilateral dialogue between North Korea and US in Beijing

in April 2003, China realized to initiate multilateral talks between all the stakeholders. The regular diplomatic efforts thus make it possible to arrange a multilateral dialogue by involving the major power states. The first round of the SPT was held in Beijing in August 2003 with the help and support of Chinese leaderships.

5.1. China role and its regional interests

China is one of the leading economic and military giant state of the region. Moreover, China being a neighbour and close ally state of North Korea, has a number of objectives which are shaping the Chinese foreign policy about the Korean Peninsula. After the end of Cold War, Beijing had been remained a close ally and especially had been considered as an important trading partner of North Korea (Bekkevold & Bowers, 2017). One of the most important interest of China according to experts is always the stability of the region. China has always opted to struggle for maintaining peace at the Korean Peninsula. In addition, China wants to use all possible ways to stop any war and ensure peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula (Zhang, 2005). China never wants any military adventurism in the region due to presence of U.S. military forces which are stationed at South Korea. The Chinese leadership therefore wants to maximize her military and economic status quo in the region. The current military and economic rivalry between China and U.S. have also shaped and influenced regional politics of Korean Peninsula. However, North Korea has always been considered as a buffer zone for China against the U.S.

China wants to settle the nuclear issue of North Korea peacefully to avoid a total collapse of North Korean regime which may then obviously will hit Chinese's economy in shape of a huge entrance of North Korean refugees towards mainland China. Being a recognized nuclear military power state China would not like to lose or minimize its influence due to aggressive Pyongyang stance about her nuclear program. According to some political observers who have stated that "Chinese leadership realizes the threat posed by nuclear program of North Korea towards Chinese national interests in the region. They also felt some threats about the growing ambitions of other regional states towards acquiring nuclear technology. China also likes to keep some stable economic relations with both Korea's because it would promote its economic objectives. Apart from this Beijing realized that the denuclearization of Northeast Asia is indeed in the best interest of China (Mubae, 2018). On the other hand, Beijing also give full considerations to her neighbours states in East Asia while formulating her foreign policy (Bader, 2005).

Apart from above, China is also facing serious challenges in shape of U.S. military presence in the region, which according to some experts are stationed only to keep a check on Chinese growing military and economic progress. So, to counter these challenges China would not like to disturb the process of negotiations and dialogues. Therefore, China had many times initiated her diplomatic efforts towards the arrangement of peaceful dialogues between North Korea and other regional states. After failure of the "Agreed Framework Agreement" between US and Pyongyang it was Chinese efforts which again made it possible to arrange a multilateral talk among all the parties in the shape of SPT in August 2003. China has seriously tried to bring all the parties to negotiating table, however, due to unpredictability of North Korean nature and U.S. noncompliance towards her promises, the nuclear issue is still unsolved. Chinese leaderships realized that U.S. administration also felt reluctant due to the factor that if the issue is once solved and if Pyongyang accept denuclearization in true spirit, then U.S. would have to vacate the region of her military bases which could then bring China on a hegemonic position

in the region. According to Rowan Callick it is impossible that Pyongyang would halt its nuclear program merely for Chinese interests and even Pyongyang would not want to stop its nuclear program for economic sake only (Callick, 2017).

Several western scholars and commentators have thus argued that China while keeping her strategic and economic interests in mind, had therefore initiated the SPT to solve the nuclear issue and growing tensions on Korean Peninsula. This was to avoid any military adventurism in the region as any pre-emptive attack on Pyongyang or any regime collapse will directly hit the Chinese regional interests and will be a challenge for Chinese own security. The repeated failure of these negotiations has produced a sense of uncertainty in the region which is obviously due to North Korean unpredictability as well as US regional policies and rigid terms and conditions for denuclearization and economic relief. Thus, a serious vacuum has been generated due to which the efforts for a successive outcome of the SPT became went all in vain. Though both China and Russia had repeatedly disclosed their interests by showing their willingness towards limiting the Pyongyang growing nuclear ambitions as well as to minimize the threat of military confrontation still both have proposed US to avoid the condition of full denuclearization as a prerequisite for easing the sanctions (Kuo, 2018). Both have proposed US and North Korea to avoid military confrontation as it would have serious consequences in the shape of devastations. Though, the role of Russia in resolving the Pyongyang nuclear issue is considered very limited and thus Moscow in this regard very rarely makes the news (Economy, 2018).

5.2. US strategic interests and its role for peaceful negotiations

For Washington, no doubt, the Pyongyang's nuclear and missiles programs poses greater challenges to its non-proliferation efforts across the world. U.S. is not only a global power state but has also a strong presence in the Northeast Asia. U.S. has multiple core strategic interests in the region as she does not only keep its presence to counter the Pyongyang's nuclear program but also to keep a check on the growing Chinese influence in this particular region. Due to a close ally of South Korea, U.S. had maintained its military and political relations with South Korea since the end of Korean wars (Pan, 2006). These close relations have provided a security umbrella to South Korea and Japan against the aggressive policies of Pyongyang. It is a fact that the nuclear program of Pyongyang has endangered not only the security, stability and peace of this particular region but also posed serious threats to the peace efforts of the adjoining regions (Fisher, 2017).

The scholars and security analysts have argued on many platforms that Pyongyang through her nuclear program wants to bargain and dictates to the regional as well as global powers according to her own choice and terms. The U.S. therefore has criticized Pyongyang nuclear adventurism and has imposed strict sanctions through UN platform. Though U.S. administrations has always adhered to strict policies regarding Pyongyang nuclear and missiles program yet some observers criticize U.S. role by arguing that U.S. in one way or another just want to exploit the whole issue because if in real and true sense the nuclear program of North Korea is settle and if North Korea accept the denuclearization process then U.S. will have to vacate this particular region and has to withdrawal all its forces which are stationed in the Korean Peninsula. In this case US will have to lose its strategic interests and influence and will also have to suffer its hegemonic position because China will get the maximum benefits in this case. As we have stated earlier that Washington and Pyongyang had suffered the failure of earlier efforts for negotiations in the form of a failed Agreed Framework Agreement in 1994.

This was due to non-seriousness of both the parties, and both were reluctant to obey the term and conditions as prescribed by the Agreement. According to some scholars, China has avoided to use its full leverage over Pyongyang to dismantle her nuclear program and that's why U.S. has started her diplomatic struggle for a meaningful denuclearization process however due to lack of trust and historical rivalry both U.S. and Pyongyang were unable to sort out the issue through diplomatic means (Muzaffar *et al.*, 2017; Lee *et al.*, 2020).

In 2002, when the situation between both US and Pyongyang became hostile, China keeping in view her regional interests came to use its leverage over Pyongyang and thus China succeeded in arranging the SPT then in August 2003. If we analyse the core U.S. interests in the region, it has been observed that U.S. has a number of regional interests. It would not like to give China a free hand in the internal affairs of the regional states. Moreover, U.S. also feels threats regarding the missile technology of North Korea which may endanger not only the security of her regional allied states but will also create threats to U.S. own security. Washington has also serious observations about the nuclear proliferation towards rogue states and non-state actors. According to some regional experts, U.S interests are multiple in nature as it not only wants to dismantle Pyongyang of her nuclear nukes but at the same time wants to remain militarily active in this region to keep a check on Chinese and Russian influence in Northeast Asia. It has also reservations regarding Taiwan issue and the South China Sea issue where in both cases China has confrontations with US. Though, U.S. leadership has repeatedly expressed that it would like to stabilize the peace of the region through negotiations and table talks. The beginning of the SPT in 2003 had indeed created an environment where all regional states were involved and there were hopes that the multilateral talks would settle the nuclear issue through peaceful means however all were in vain when in 2006 Pyongyang tested her first nuclear nuke which badly affected the struggle for a peaceful solution of the nuclear program of North Korea.

5.3. North Korean perspective

During the era of Cold War, the Korean Peninsula was a hot spot and a local theatre in a global security context between the east and west (Armacost, 2001). The war between South Korea and North Korea (Korean wars) ended in 1953 by the signing of an armistice which means technically the war still continues till date (Ward, 2019). Both North Korea and South Korea had experienced hostile and harsh relations due to ideological differences between both the Koreas which they were facing since long. After the Korean wars an armistice was signed between both the North Korea and South Korea which had divided them along the 38th parallel along the demilitarize zone. According to some regional experts North Korean nuclear program had links with the historical rivalry among both Koreas which is basically a tussle between Capitalism and Communism. This sharp conflict between these two ideologies never let them to move towards unification. According to some western scholars who argued that North Korea had initiated its nuclear program mainly due to three basic reasons i.e., to counter its rival states South Korea and Japan, to defend the country from any pre-emptive attack of the US forces and in the last to get its economic interests through exploitation of its nuclear nukes in international relations.

Right after the signing of armistice, the major powers states started to influence the regional politics through their mutual rivalry. Both U.S. and USSR were in a Cold War and were both supporting their own allies. The South was supported by the U.S. while Pyongyang was backed by USSR and China. The rivalry between these states has badly shaped and influenced the

politics on the Korean Peninsula. U.S. has stationed her military personnel in South Korea, then in Japan to keep a check on China, USSR and North Korean nuclear ambitions. These early threats have converted the minds of their leaders towards security and military development and thus a vacuum was produced towards economic development. Pyongyang thus focused all attention and energy towards military development. It is believed that Pyongyang during its initial stages of the nuclear program had been supported by USSR and China, however, it is also believed that most of the nuclear program had been continued and completed without any major support from any foreign state.

After the division of Korean Peninsula between North and South, Pyongyang due to her early tussles with South Korea and Japan had started to work on her nuclear program to ensure its sovereignty. This secret development towards nuclear nukes has started to influence the security paradigm of the region. South Korea and Japan had started to criticize North Korean nuclear ambitions. Soon U.S. had also demanded harsh sanction on Pyongyang through UN platform. These developments had created serious threats of a major war in the region. North Korean nuclear program has many objectives and through which Pyongyang is using its nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip against U.S. and her regional allies. North Korea wants to pressurize the major powers to get economic support and to ensure her own security. Their leadership has always defended their nuclear program and had blamed U.S. and her regional allies for disturbing the stability of the region through their military exercise and military advancement in the region. Some efforts were initiated by China in the region by arranging the multilateral negotiations through SPT however due to lack of seriousness between the parties all efforts lost its credibility.

Though, Pyongyang has repeatedly asked Washington to take serious steps towards normalization of the relationship. Pyongyang has openly denied any denuclearization process without any U.S. advance steps towards real normalization process. North Korea according to some regional experts would never like to bypass its core national interests and will want to ensure each and every term related to her national interests. Pyongyang's nuclear missiles program has provided a shield to her sovereignty against the U.S. and her regional allies in Northeast Asia and therefore without any security insurance, it would be impossible to get the maximum results regarding the denuclearization efforts. Furthermore, there is need of taking confidence building measures between U.S. and North Korea. It is also a fact that Pyongyang understands that any development regarding US-Pyongyang relations can not only change the internal perceptions but also its international perception about Pyongyang's approach towards the U.S. (Staar, 2021). There is increasing strategic competition between US and China which is badly influencing the security situation in the region. The worsening of regional security also has some serious consequences on the security paradigm of Northeast Asia (Shambaugh, 2018). In such dilemma all states once again need to re-examine their policies to come back towards a negotiating table.

5.4. US security umbrella and South Korean- Japan perspectives

For Washington due to its geo- political interests in East Asian region, some of the scenarios would be better than its trilateral alliance with its regional allies like Japan and South Korea which in turn could keep a check on growing Chinese influence and North Korean nuclear program (Doyle, 2019). For decades U.S. policy has been focused and cantered on the denuclearization for peace (Depetris, 2019). After the division of both Koreas, U.S. had started expanding its influence in the region and thus had sided with South Korea and Japan against

the aggressive communist policies of North Korea. On the other hand, South Korea is one of the closest ally states of U.S. in this region and the country had the support of U.S. military which is stationed in South Korea. According to the experts, there are two reasons which have forced U.S. to give military support South Korea: the first reason is the early communist policies of Mao regime; the second reason was the North-South historical rivalry and the nuclear ambitions of Pyongyang. Both Koreas had faced deteriorated relations after the Second World War which results in the shape of division of the Korea not only geographically but ideologically too.

Though in early 1990s some positive developments took place through the dialogues when both countries signed agreement on different issues like cooperation, reconciliation and steps for mutual cooperation. However, after the 1998 Sunshine policy which was introduced by South Korean leadership, the relations remained hostile for most of the time between the two. It is also a fact that since 1994, Pyongyang had experienced the development of nuclear as well as missiles advancement which were capable of targeting the U.S. mainland which had created tension in Washington as well as in the region (Perry, 1999). In the aftermath of these developments, U.S. as well as South Korea considered Pyongyang missile and military adventurism as a real threat for the security of the Korean Peninsula and has demanded complete denuclearization of North Korean nuclear program for real stability in the region. The unpredictable nature of Kim regime had threatened the security of Korean Peninsula and therefore South Korea has started to improve her military through U.S. backed support. U.S. and South Korean military had regularly started to conduct different military exercises in the region, and both have recently installed missile defence system known as "THAAD" to counter any Pyongyang pre-emptive attack.

Japan is another ally of U.S. in the region which has a history of hostile relations with North Korea. One of the reasons of their harsh relation was the economic relations of Japan with South Korea after the division of Peninsula. According to some scholars till 1980 Pyongyang policy towards Japan was to minimize South Korean-Japan relations however the relations were more antagonistic during the late 1980s. It was due to the North Korean media attack on Japan which had kept the relations at minimum level. The relations later also deteriorated due to Pyongyang missiles attack towards Japanese territorial water. The main reason behind this strained relationship is the North Korean nuclear and missiles program, marine poaching, spaying and other covert activities against each other's. The Japanese leader Shinzo Abe during Donald Trump presidency had openly declared that unless and until Pyongyang was not agreed on complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization process there would be very less chances of successful dialogues with North Korea (Sengupta, 2018). The Japanese leadership had also criticized the Chinese role in the region by supporting Pyongyang after harsh economic sanctions were imposed on Pyongyang. Recently the Nodong missile tests which having a range of 1300 km had also threaten Japanese military circles. Both South Korea and Japan have started to re-examine their policies in the region and therefore have started to improve their military forces. Both states have serious concerns regarding Pyongyang aggressive military policies and have repeatedly demanded complete denuclearization of North Korean nuclear program.

5.5. Failure of Six Party Talks (SPT) and security dilemma for the region

The nuclear program of North Korea has, no doubt, created multiple threats to the security and stability of Northeast Asia (Panda, 2010). There are much scholarly debates regarding the

North Korean nuclear issue. Some experts believe that the effort for the table talks and negotiations which were initiated by the Chinese leadership has badly suffered and after 2009 the SPT are suspended. Nevertheless, efforts were made by Chinese leadership again to restart the SPT but due to many obstacles the SPT is still to be resumed. According to some regional experts there were many reasons which resulted in the failure of the SPT. Some argued that both U.S. and North Korea always have doubts against each other. Their lack of trust due to their historical misunderstanding has never let them to get success in this matter. Indeed, it is surprising that both U.S. and Pyongyang can narrow the gap between their interests and way of dealing so as to achieve some positive results in the negotiation efforts (Kim, 2020). The experience which was gained due to their earlier Agreed Framework Agreement had never been side-lined and thus both states once again repeated their earlier mistakes and stances against each other.

The primary cause which leads towards the failure of SPT stemmed due to the inability of all members states to root out the elements of distrust. Apart from this, the non-compliance towards their earlier promises has also led to the mistrust between each other. The North Korean belligerent attitude has also suffered the SPT a lot due to the repeated violations of the terms of the dialogues. On the other side U.S., South Korean and Japanese leadership have never tried to move one step forward to accept the Pyongyang's legal and serious concerns about her economic and security demands. In this regard if we analyse the whole situation, we can understand that China, Russia and other two members states like South Korea and Japan also need to ensure that both US and North Korea should strictly compliance to the terms of the agreements which were announced and made during the process. In this regard some observers also blame and criticize Chinese role. They argued that China has always more leverage on Pyongyang and therefore China should not only act like a spectator, but China should apply her utmost influence on North Korea to stop her belligerent attitude during the negotiations process.

China though is working hard to sort out the issue through negotiations and talks however, Chinese leaderships on many occasions had criticized U.S. for breaking her promises as mentioned during the agreements. China has also blamed U.S. regional policy and especially her military support towards South Korea and Japan which had created a security threat in Pyongyang security paradigm. Regional experts and political commentators have argued that the future of Northeast Asia is related to the future of the SPT which needs immediate attention. The nuclear ambitions of the Kim regime have produced anxiety and tension on the Korean Peninsula. Any military adventurism in the region may lead to huge destructions in the shape of a full-fledge war which needs abrupt actions. If all parties came across a meaningful and fruitful results in the future through multilateral negotiations, then it would be reckoned as a great achievement which may lead towards stability and mutual cooperation between the regional states. Though, even today none of the member of the SPT believes that North Korea will dismantle its nuclear program (Chenjun, 2018).

6. Conclusion

The nuclear program of North Korea has severely affected the security of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea after her division with South Korea has been experiencing hostile relations especially with South Korea and Japan in this region. The ideological tussle between South Korean and North Korea has never let both the states to unify. The historical war during 1950 to 1953 which is also known as Korean War has given birth to nonstop skirmishes and conflicts

between both states. Moreover, the involvement of the great powers like US, USSR and China has further disturbed the security of region where U.S. has stationed 23000 military personnel for the security of her allies' states. China which is considered as a close friendly state of North Korea has always avoided the complete collapse of North Korea because it would have to create refugees' migration towards China then. China also recognized North Korea as buffer states against U.S. stationed forces which were present in South Korea. China has serious observations about US-South Korean growing military advancement in the region. After the experience of a failure of the earlier "Agreed Framework Agreement" during 90s, the relations between U.S. and North Korea became very hostile.

In this situation China started to arrange multilateral talks first in 2003 between North Korea and US and then expanded it to SPT by involving Russia, South Korea and Japan in August 2003. From August 2003 to 2009 different rounds of SPT were arranged between the parties. Though, some favourable outcomes were achieved when North Korea accepted some of terms of the agreements however the SPT lost its importance when Pyongyang tested its first nuclear nukes in October 2006. Some observers have argued that there were multiple reasons which were not addressed properly by the concerned states and that's why SPT has been suspended since 2009. The mistrust between the concerned parties on each other and the avoidance from fulfilling their promises has also affected the dialogue process which ultimately resulted in the failure. Apart from this there is a lack of proper mechanism which can force both U.S. and North Korea to obey the terms of the agreements and conditions in true sense. Chinese role has been criticized by many regional states on the ground that though China had initiated the process of SPT however keeping in view Chinese support and leverage over Pyongyang one can say that China due to multiple reasons has avoided to maximize her full influence on Pyongyang on the agenda of denuclearization process. China on the other hand has criticizes U.S. role by not obeying the terms and conditions in letter and spirit.

In this regard, the North Korean act of sticking to her nuclear weapons program is also said to be a cause of the failure of these talks. It was noted that even during the process of the negotiations, North Korea remained active with an underground work towards her nuclear program and thus had tested her first nuclear test in 2006. There was also a lack of proper institutional approach to solve the nuclear issue of North Korea and to ensure the stability of the region. The mutual rivalry between U.S., China and Russia and their contest for securing their own national interests has further paved the way for failure. These big powers were busy to counter each other's policies in pursuit of their regional interests and thus it leads towards mistrust on each other. Moreover, North Korean sticking to its nuclear program cannot be justified however the sticking of U.S. to a denuclearization first and bypassing the security guarantee of Pyongyang has badly affected the negotiation process. The failure and suspension of the SPT have some serious implications on the security of Northeast Asia. The growing tension in the shape of borders skirmishes between South Korea and North Korea, the military exercises of U.S. and her allied forces in the region and the nuclear and missiles tests of North Korea may lead to a full fledged war which would be a serious blow to the whole peace efforts. Now it is high time for all stakeholders to come back to negotiating table and initiate serious steps to solve the nuclear issue and other related issues by refocusing on SPT. The role of major powers and also the role of Pyongyang in this regard would be very important for the durable stability of the Korean Peninsula.

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