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Acquiring Strategic Hegemony and International Motives: Nuclearization of Iran and North Korea

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Abstract

Iran and North Korea developed their Nuclear Program in 1960s. Both countries endeavour to assume this program to acquire regional strategic hegemony in days when Middle East and East Asian regions simultaneously experiencing strategic non-equilibrium owing to bipolarity in international political system. This research paper is an attempt to study the strategic, regional and international motives of both states which strived them to pursue nuclear program first as mean to acquire peace then steadily tilted towards strategic objectives with the passage of time. In the beginning of 21st century both countries were declared by American political regime as pariah states due to their expanded strategic aspirations. Comparative analysis of the nuclear program of both countries is presented in a way that in what circumstances both nations strive for strategic interests in nuclear program. Furthermore, idiosyncratic and political efforts made by the leaders of the two countries is also emphasized. This research paper is unique as it represented the comparative overview so that an understanding can be developed to deeply analyse the ongoing and future approaches in the nuclear security paradigm which is emerging in Middle East and East Asia amid strategic unrest at multiple occasions.

Key Words: Strategic Hegemony, Iran, North Korea, Nuclearization, Denuclearization.

Introduction

Iran and North Korea are considered as important case studies which track on nuclear program as a mean of strategic objectives due to their rivalry with America. So far, no other nuclearized country possessing had entered in this arena under such circumstances. This become a unique case studies to understand that why these states have opted only for the nuclear technology as a mean to curb the threats from Washington. Upon studying various sources of studies, we understand that there were a number of factors which establish a path for Tehran and Pyongyang to obtain nuclear program as a mean for establishing their strategic objectives. Some of the important factors are given as following;

- i. The political regimes of Iran and North Korea felt insecurity from the very beginning after the Second World War was over that, Americans have certain security interests in their regional around. When the war was over, regional

insecurity strives them to limit their security at least for the survival of their political regimes so that they make their national interests in the emerging cold war order. The political regimes in both states did not want to become the US allies to pursue cliental regional interests. Instead, they want to promote their regime's stability and thus accelerate the nuclear program.

- ii. As perceived threats from USA as well as from the regional states which were too US allies, the security of state become volatile. This situation stressed the need to make every possible arrangement for strategic deterrence.
- iii. In the emerging regional and international political dynamics, both Iran and North Korea wanted to make their regimes as offensive against US by taking security measures at their own national outlay. They did not rely or have interests to join the US bloc during cold war rivalry. They were also cautious about the Soviets interest too. So after evaluating the regional and international politics in that era they decided to pursue regional hegemony at any cost to contain the US pressure. The only mean at that time was the nuclear program
- iv. The strategic culture of Tehran and Pyongyang was heavily explored on military might. This military aspiration sometimes failed to achieve the security interests. Alternatively, states go for alternative means. At that time, that alternative mean was nuclear technology at least which create deterrence. That deterrence too was really matter for Iran and North Korea.
- v. In both cases, the idiosyncratic elements from the politics were very active to thrive the state motives of strong and prolonged survival. This survival according to those elements was possible only, when state fully explore the nuclear technology. Every leader from both nations developed interests to acquire the nuclear technology (Faisal & Ahmad, 2019).

Like the other nuclear states, Iran and North Korea too adopted civil nuclear program and established it to carry peaceful objectives. However, the regional and international circumstances compelled both the states to apply additional measurements to fulfill the national security objectives. The political regimes of the two countries realized that their national interests could only be fulfilled, if they aspire to become nuclearized (McGlinchy & Choksy, 2012). That is why, both started working on their nuclear programs. The political leadership in states also advocated this aspiration to their nation so that public context could also have strong advocacy. The context of this research paper is to under the steady development of nuclear program of Iran and North Korea on historical lines. The study also explores the strategic, national, regional and international objectives of the two states while working simultaneously on their nuclear programs. This research is divided into three parts. First part firefly analyzed the strategic culture of Middle East and East Asia which compelled both the states for conquering strategic means from their respective regions. The second part specifically study the evolution, aspirations, development and hindrances for both states while working on the nuclear program. The role of the leadership of the two sides is also aligned for the strategic support of this initiative. The last part signifies that what are the possible outcomes and their

impact which have been adopted so far to roll back the nuclear program of Tehran and North Korea. Post 2015 developments is also analyzed by analyzing the results obtained from Iran nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1 countries and Singapore summit between former US President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un. The research signifies comparative overview of the nuclear program of Iran and North Korea and also analyzed the ongoing and possible future scenario on the nuclearization in Middle East and East Asia.

In 1960s: Strategic Culture of Middle East & East Asia

In late 1950s, the global international order consequentially changed due to six years prolonged Second World War. This development ended the previous multipolar strategic culture form the world. The new strategic changes avenue Washington and former Soviet Union as rival forces. Although, the establishment of United Nations in 1945 also displayed an institutional character of the new global order. But, the tug of war between the two super powers provides new strategic momentum in different regions. The most abruptly strategic challenges were observed in Middle East and East Asia. As soon as the strategic interests of US stakeholders emerged in these two regions, the power politics also found critical security environment too (Santini, R.H., 2017).

The Iranian government under the leadership was enjoying cordial relations with the Truman administration in 1950s. However, Tehran did not want to accept the regional hegemony either from Israel or from Saudi Arabia. The government asked the US administration to oblige Middle East countries in signing a regional security treaty under the leadership of Iran. But that was not acceptable to Israel and Riyadh. Apart from this, Iran pursued Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries for striving a pact. The attempt was not fulfilled as GCC had already signed bilateral security agreements with USA. The Washington administration exponentially patronized Israel and Saudi Arabia on different security parameters and it is argued that a regional strategic rivalry was being promoted by Americans in the region during 1960s (Santini, R.H., 2017). In this whole scenario, the balance of power diverted towards America, which significantly altered the existing regional security order. The US government concluded different bilateral security treaties with Saudis, Israelis, Iranians and GCC countries. This trend explored a tendency in Iran's political regime that the survival of their regime is only possible as to explore indigenous strategic decisions on security related issues. Although cooperation between US and Iran continued but deep strategic relations could not be evolved (Faisal, M., 2020).

The security situation of East Asia was also very alarming in 1960s. After the end of Second World War, the region strived into another conflict which divided the Korean Peninsula into South Korea and North Korea by marking 38th parallel line as the territorial boundary. The newly emerged and self-proclaimed nation state; North Korea adopted politically self-isolation. The regime established Kim dynasty which started ruling on dictatorial notions under Korean Worker Party (Ostermann, C.F & Person, J., n.d). On the other hand, US government expanded the security shield for Japan and South Korea which was considered by North Korea as a mean to destabilize their political regime. The North Korean leadership developed a security dilemma to establish tangible security interests for its people. Although the

country had Soviets support but it did not rely on it. China too was ready to sponsor the security of Pyongyang. However, the leadership of North Korea decided to depend on the domestic security hike instead on depending the regional countries (Faisal, M & Ahmad, R.E., 2019).

The state advocated *songun* ideology which means that North Korea is the only militarily strongest nation of East Asia. The leadership also advocated that nuclear program is very crucial for the survival of political regime. Apart from these strategies, North Korea also preferred to exercise coercive diplomatic tactics to acquire regional security interests of East Asia by challenging US and its allied states Japan and South Korea (Faisal, M., 2020).

The above described strategic posture of Middle East and East Asia during 1960s compelled both Iran and North Korea to signify the importance of nuclear program for attaining strategic objectives in the regional atmosphere. The situation of both regions was extremely imbalanced as multiple states wanted to establish their strategic hegemony and Iran in case of Middle East and North Korea in case of East Asia challenged not only the strategic power of their antagonist states but also decided to proclaim nuclear technology as a mean to create strategic hegemony in regional and international affairs.

Evolution of Nuclear Program of Iran

Iran started its nuclear program in early 1950s. The state was an important ally of America at that time. Shah of Iran had cordial relations with Washington. The perception to start this nuclear program was to meet the energy needs of Tehran. It negotiated with western states and concluded civil nuclear agreements with Germany and France. Those agreements were signed to fulfill the medical research. Before moving to debate about the beginning of the nuclear program of Iran, it is very important to under the US agenda about *Atoms for Peace*.

Atoms for Peace: US President Eisenhower delivered a historic speech in United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 08, 1953. He announced his agenda of '*Atoms for Peace*' during this speech. The pinpoint of that speech was to promote the nuclear cooperation among the US allies in the post-World War Second regime. The Eisenhower administration wanted to spread the nuclear program to its allies all over the world so that the allied states may explore the peaceful usage of this program. The US president remarked that;

“If a danger exists in the world, then it is a danger shared
by the world community. However, if hope exists in the
mind of one state/nation. It should also be shared by all” (IAEA, 1952)

It is argued that this US agenda established a bargaining model between Eisenhower administration and the developing states. Under this deal the American government provided research reactors, fuel and exchanged trainings to several scientists from developing countries to establishing civil nuclear programs across the world. Reciprocally, the developing states were asked by the Eisenhower administration that civil nuclear treaties will restrict the partner nations only for peaceful objectives. It will have no concern for militarization of the nuclear program (Rowberry, Ariana, 2013).

Some scholars of International Relations believe that, *Atoms for Peace* established the foundation for spreading the dual use of civil nuclear technology. The use of highly enriched uranium can be equally carried for peaceful as well as for the strategic objectives by the states.

US-Iran Civil Nuclear Deal: Iran and USA signed civil nuclear treaty on March 05, 1957. This treaty came into force as a bargaining chip between the two states. Iranian government want to establish civil nuclear stations to mitigate the arising challenges of energy due to rapid domestic industrialization while US government wanted to empower Iran as a buffer state against the Soviet Union regional hegemony. Two years later in 1959, Shah of Iran formally inaugurated the Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC) at University of Tehran. After passing 10 years, Iran established its first nuclear facility named Tehran Research Reactor in 1967. It was a 5 megawatt nuclear research reactor which was established by USA (Mousavian, S.H & Mousavian, M.M., 2018).

A global revelation about the development of nuclear weapons was firstly hailed as India, China and Pakistan were also preparing their nuclear program. That is why, it is argued that an advocacy regarding the intrinsic aspiration for strategic means was hinted by the Shah of Iran. In 1974 the Guardian of Iran implored that, they had need and options for developing their nuclear program on military line as their country is weak in conventional line of defense in comparison with other regional states such as Israel and Saudi Arabia (McGlinchy, S & Choksy, J.K., 2012). In next year, Tehran concluded an agreement with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) under which the American government provided scholarship to the Iranian scientists and engineers in two years Master program of nuclear engineering at MIT.

After 1979 revolution, USA abruptly roll back its nuclear agreement with Iran. But till that time, the Middle Eastern nation had developed nuclear cooperation with Germany, France and Pakistan. Germany built a 1200 megawatt light water reactor to produce nuclear energy at Bushehr, in Southern city of Iran. France also established a joint endeavor to produce nuclear fuel. While Pakistan provided scientific assistance for developing centrifuges. However, the cooperation with these countries was also abandoned due to American diplomatic pressure. This development realized Iranian government that it should now focus on developing indigenous scientific efforts to complete the ongoing nuclear projects. In 1980s, Iran entangled with Iraq which targeted its neighbor with lethal chemical attacks and missiles. At this stage, Iran produced small amount of radioactive material Polonium-210 which is used for chemical chain reaction in nuclear weapon (Rowberry, Ariana, 2013).

Iran's Comprehensive National Nuclear Program: This program was established by Akbar Etemad. He served as President of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) which was established in 1973 by Shah of Iran to expand the nuclear program of Iran. Etemad also served as the Shah of Iran's Chief Atomic Energy Advisor. He is actually known as the *father of the nuclear program of Iran*. He proclaimed that actually Shah of Iran wanted civil nuclear program. However, the changing regional dynamics perceived him to lookout for strategic options too. These announcements made by Iran's ruler was not officially coded. However, the 1990s scenario climaxed these tendencies (Asfandiari, G., n.d). Although, US

administration successfully made pressure on Argentina, India, France, Germany, Spain and China not to cooperate with Iran at further steps. All these states halted their cooperation with Tehran. Meanwhile, Iran established new links with Russia and concluded a deal with Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy for completion of Bushehr power reactor under IAEA protections. The US did not jubilate with this development and imposed sanctions under 1996 Libya-Iran Sanctions Act and under Iran Nonproliferation Act in 2000.

Beginning of Nuclear Crisis: From 1990s, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), former Iranian President Hossein Mousavi, Religious Clergy, Middle-level state officials, high power elites and the general public too were in favor of initiation of nuclear program on strategic lines. AMAD program was established under concealed agenda frame. Tehran also signed additional protocols with China and Russia for revoking its nuclear program at Parchin Military Complex (Warrick, J., 2003). During the presidency Hashemi-Rafsanjani, nuclear program was fully resumed. Uranium enrichment facilities continued during Mohammad Khatami presidency.

In 2003, IAEA reported that uranium enrichment facilities in Iran have significantly improved in last 10 years. However, the weapons of Mass Destruction cannot be acquired by this regime in next 10 to 20 years. However, if the speed of uranium enrichment increase in future, it will establish a view point that Iran will steadily acquire nuclear weapon facility. It also established its missile program to carry the nuclear warheads during this period (Einhorn, R & Diepen, V.H.V., 2019). According to Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control website, there are currently more than 45 nuclear enrichment facilities which are steadily working (Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control 2023).

Former President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proclaimed *weltanschauung* policy. Under the policy, he proclaimed that his country will never abandon its nuclear program. Under his regime, the world perception raised as Iran was exponentially growing its ambitions to becoming the nuclear state. The IAEA inspection was banned during his regime. Iran also established new fissile centers to enrichment Uranium at broader level. Tehran expanded the uranium enrichment centers during 2005-2011. However, Iran did not fully evolve as nuclear states. In 2006, AEOI presented a report which argued that Iran steadily increasing the uranium enrichment facilities at eight different places (Fathi, N., et. al., 2006). The domestic media reports from Iran and the international information aired Iran as proclaiming nuclear weapons however, the strategic dimensions did not verify by any means. Furthermore, it was evident that Iran did not officially halted break to the uranium enrichment facility and further expanded cooperation with China and Russia. President Hassan Rouhani devised a moderate diplomacy and avoided direct entanglement with western countries. He also served previously as chief negotiator during Mohammad Khatami presidency. He proclaimed to establish Middle East as Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) and also envisioned that his country will never utilize the nuclear program for strategic objectives. That is why he started negotiations with P5+1 states (USA, China, France, Britain, Germany and EU) and finally a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or Iran Nuclear Deal was signed between Iran and P5+1 countries in July 2015. This negotiation process was halted for many times since 2003. This nuclear deal established the following framework;

- i. Iran will limit uranium enrichment below 20% and also reduce centrifuges production in next 15 years.
- ii. Iran will also not construct any heavy water plant in next 15 years and IAEA will regularly inspect the fissile nuclear material (Sanger, D & Gordon, M., 2015)

In response, the EU, USA and other western allies promised to lift the sanctions made by them. This development eased Iran for limited time as the Trump administration proclaimed the deal as horrible and one-sided (Landler, M., 2018). The other western allies except USA and Iran pledged to support and abide by the agreement in letter and spirit. In the aftermath of JCPOA, Tehran is strongly advocating the spirit to implement the NWFZ agreement in Middle East. From the whole scenario, it is evident that Iran steadily increased the fissile material enrichment. According to various reports by the AEOI Iran still in process to acquire the means for developing nuclear program on strategic lines. However, this will take time and resources.

Evolution of Nuclear Program of North Korea

Likewise, Iran in Middle East, North Korea in East Asia too was experiencing the US hegemony in early 1950s. The leadership of the state was confronting with challenging situation of regional political isolation, economic insecurity and strategic inferiority. There was no external security shield which was available to Pyongyang at that time. The supreme leader of North Korea consistently established such strategic domains which unbalance the Korean Peninsula.

Understanding the Background: In early 1950s, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower extended the nuclear generosity for developing countries like Syria, Iran, South Africa and South Korea under the Atoms for Peace Initiative. In East Asia, US administration also extended its Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) program to Korean Peninsula (Xuetong, Y., 1999). Japan and South Korea became the ally in this program. While North Korean administration perceived it a challenge to their political regime, regional integrity and domestic security. It started finding the nuclear possibility apart from strengthening its conventional aura of defense.

Charter of Cooperation: The TMD program by USA in Korean Peninsula compelled North Korea to find new joint ventures by stressing domestic capability in the national security. It was also revealed a fear dilemma in the mind of Kim Il-Sung that his country might lagged behind in the regional security paradigm. Finally, in 1952 Charter of Cooperation was concluded between former Soviet Union and North Korea. The Soviets pledged to support Pyongyang by establishing nuclear program. Under this agreement, Joseph Stalin agreed to establish Atomic Energy Research Institute (AERI) as well as an Academy of Sciences. In addition to this, Kim Il-Sung also concluded an additional agreement for the expansion of its nuclear program. Under this agreement, Moscow was willing to establish a nuclear research complex in Yongbyong. In addition to this, USSR also provided additional facilities such as nuclear fuel, equipment, and engineering blueprints (Faisal, M., 2020). After Cuban Missile crisis, Soviet Union abandoned cooperation with North Korea.

Emergence of Nonproliferation Regime: The global nonproliferation regime was emerged in 1970s. The Pyongyang rulers oversighted on this program with strategic eye. They considered this global regime as an opportunity for establishing nuclear weapons. North Korea became signatory of this Nonproliferation regime in 1974. For the next five years, North Korea deployed a scientist in IAEA headquarter Geneva which oversighted the secret documents and sent information to their country. The information regarding the procedure for the designing of the nuclear reactor (Wilson Center Report, 2010).

Aspirations for Nuclearization: Kim Il-Sung is the right man who established the nuclear program of North Korea. He is also known as the *father of North Korean nuclear weapons*. When Soviets withdrew cooperation, North Korea asked for assistance from China which eventually did not accepted. In this way, then Pyongyang realized the intensity of pressure from USA on regional countries and finally decided to establish an indigenous nuclear program. The scientists and engineers trained by Soviets significantly developing this program on strategic lines from mid 1970s to onward (Bermudez Jr., J.S., 2015). Until the beginning of 1990s, the international organizations and states did not pay any importance to North Korea. It was this period when USA, EU, UNSC, IAEA, South Korea and Japan eventually started eyeing on the nuclear developments in North Korea. In this phase, the scientists got enormous expansion in acquiring Light Water Reactor, heavy fuel, and light water reactors. In 1992, IAEA inspection team officially declared that North Korea had acquired the diversion capability to reform plutonium from civil to nuclear weapons line.

Withdrawing from Nonproliferation Treaty: In 2002, USA took serious action and suspended the supply of heavy oil shipment to North Korea as IAEA raised concerns about the successful acquisition of nuclear weapons. The US also included in the *Axis of Evils* groups along with Iran and Iraq. At this point, Kim Jong-Il resisted the decision and also expelled the IAEA team from North Korea. He also withdrew from the Nonproliferation treaty. North Korea is the only nation which had withdrew her membership (The Guardian, 2003).

Exploding Nuclear Weapons: The Kim Jong-Il regime made an announcement by exploding the nuclear test in 2006. The state self-proclaimed as the nuclear power. The line for developing for nuclear weapons continued from 1990s to date. In 2013, Kim Jong-Un adopted *Byongjin* ideology exploring simultaneous development for economy and nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Doctrine of North Korea: North Korea declared its nuclear doctrine in 2016. According to this doctrine, Kim Jong-Un announced that Pyongyang will never firstly use the nuclear weapons. The state will only use these weapons in circumstances, when its sovereignty will be under threat (Arms Control Association Data, 2023).

Nuclear Doctrine II: In 2022, North Korea released a new doctrine. This doctrine was different from the previous. This doctrine advocated that North Korean Nuclear posture will be ready for action at every time. The state could use its weapons as pre-emptively. Furthermore, it was emphasized that large tactical nuclear weapons will be developed in future (Arms Control Association Data, 2023).

Why Nuclearization is the only way for Iran and North Korea

There are multiple factors by considering which both Iran and North Korea developed their nuclear program at the strategic line. These factors are interconnected with each other and drew a parallel line of action for both states. Despite the regional and international diplomatic pressure, multi-regional decisions and economic sanctions as well as the UN resolutions, the two states steadily accelerated their ambitions for developing nuclear program. North Korea announced its nuclear power in 2006 while Iran is still making their nuclear choice and struggling between UN, EU and US economic sanctions.

It is argued that both Iran and North Korea are located in the security riddled regions of Middle East and East Asia. The strategic balance of these regions were not in favor of these states. Their economic instabilities also gave a momentum to their leadership to explore the alternative security path to achieve the desired goals. In achieving those goals and national interests both countries transformed their civil nuclear experiments into strategic exercises. The international eye watch organizations and states asked these two states to revisits their objectives and also imposed sanctions. However, their struggle continues in strategic direction.

From the beginning, the two states adopted political isolation in their regional and international strategic and economic environment. This isolation practically gave a sentiment to the regional and international organizations and states that they wanted to tended significant security and strategic changes in their favor. Both states too wanted their hegemony at least in the security paradigm so that a momentum to lead their regional aspirations. In 1960s to 1990s, many states pledged to promote regional economic integration while Iran in Middle East and North Korea in East Asia focused only on the security and strategic needs. The leadership from both states also intake strategic favor from Soviets stakeholders. No regional and international partnership was emerged in their favor in any sector.

The post Second World War order gave a new bipolar security world order where different regions were focused on by Soviets and US for maintaining/acquiring strategic goal. These states signed various regional security pacts and treaties. The two super powers showed extreme political and strategic interests in East Asia and Middle East. In former region, North Korea did not join in any regional security shield while in later case, Iran was part of the CENTO Pact but still felt insecurity and fear dilemma in the regional political environment. That is why bot states established civil nuclear programs in early 1960s and eventually expanded it into strategic line until 1990s. Instead of finding security shield both states preferred to find domestic reliability on strategic nuclear weapons.

As both states aspired to delve into security dilemma until 1990s. Various sanctions were promulgated by the international organizations and states. The two states also did not find economic opportunities in their regional environment. So, trade of both states remained limited in their regional and international environment. Both states also did not evolve their economic strategy according to the changing political environment with the passage of time. Limited trade options developed insecurity syndrome in Pyongyang and Tehran and they decided to explore the nuclear program. The last but not least argument is that both states had their own strategic psychology in their regional dynamic. That dynamic remained militarily static and

orthodox. According to the changing regional patterns in Middle East and East both states did not adopt new and reformed policies and still both countries are focusing on acquiring nuclear explosion as the only way to establishing regional hegemony. The status quo political regimes in both states found strategies which only revolve around the strategic aspirations. Both states wanted to proceed these aspirations in near future as well.

How Iran and North Korea dealing with Western Narrative

The western narrative regarding the nuclearization of Iran and North Korea is predominantly exercised and advocated by US administration. This narrative is also based on the traditional syndrome such as political comments, states, coercive diplomacy and hegemonic security shield as well as the regional/international isolation of Iran and North Korean policies. The main focus of this western narrative is that both are Pariah elements as nuclear weapons will not be secured in their control. The regional anarchy will increase as going nuclearization by Iran and North Korea. It is also argued by the US administration that state terrorism will also increase owing to the control of weapons of mass destruction by these two states.

Both Iran and North Korea turned down the western propaganda on the ground that the credibility of those who are carrying the nuclear weapons (seven nuclear states) is also a question for international strategic regime. These seven nuclear states have created the strategic competition in different regions and advocated the acute preparation of nuclear weapons for military deterrence. In a nutshell, this military deterrence provided a way for the other states which were feeling fear dilemma and insecurity trying to exercise and control of the nuclear weapons. Consequently, on acquiring the nuclear capability in case of North Korea have maintained a modern deterrence for the states against the regional security design (Faisal, M., 2020; Faisal, M & Ahmad, R.E., 2019).

Both Tehran and North Korea also advocated that it is the American administration itself which had tried to create a regional insecurity perception in the mind of the political forces in Middle East and North Korea that resulted into the advancement of their security. In the beginning, this advancement was restricted traditional military modernization which steadily diverted towards nuclearization of North Korea and Iran. The two states also advocated that the extreme level of security intervention in the name regional security shield and joint military exercises compelled them to prepare domestically for defensive nuclear weapons which levelled the strategic balance. The leadership of both states also advocated that there is no strategic vulnerability at least in the national security of posture in the domestic and regional strategic conundrum.

Uncertainty in Denuclearization of Iran and North Korea

Denuclearization is the act of reduction or phased elimination of nuclear weapons by a state. It is also described as the minimization of nuclear arms in phases eventually leads to achieve zero nuclear reserves. The proponents of this theory exercised that denuclearization minimize the probability of nuclear war occurring in any region, retaliatory nuclear strikes and intimated nuclear threats. The regions having more than one nuclear states stressed for denuclearization for maintain regional strategic balance. It is the more popular argument given by number of international forums, NGOs and regional political organizations in contemporary

times. In 1980s, when Iran and North Korea with other developing states were maintaining experiments for attaining fissile material, a strong denuclearization movement was emerged in different parts of the world. Under this world advocacy, US and Soviets started negotiations to limit or the minimization of their nuclear weapons. The objective of these negotiations between the two major powers was to establish international norms to roll back or discouraging the acquisition of nuclear arms Lettow, P., n. d).

In Iran and North Korean perspectives, negotiations for disarming these two states arranged many times since 2002. However, simultaneous results did not evolve. Upon the tracking back of North Korea from Nonproliferation treaty in 2003, and Iran's ambitions for the aspirations of going nuclear created realization for the international community and especially for the western bloc. Firstly, they imposed sanctions in various domains and started coercing these states to roll back their indigenous nuclear programs. As failed on this framework, negotiation process on various forums started taking place. In case of last 20 years, two important forum of negotiation were held. These are six parties talks where six round of negotiations were held while in Singapore Summit only one round organized with no further bilateral rounds of diplomatic negotiations.

Six Parties Talks: The framework for six parties was decided in 2003. The main objective of these negotiations was to pledge North Korea to stop its nuclear program. It was also pledged to create regional stability in Korean Peninsula. The talks were attended by six countries such as USA, China, Russia, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea. Until 2009, six rounds of negotiations were held in Beijing being hosted by China. Various protocols and agreements were framed but in 2009, North Korea boycotted these talks and decided no longer to remain part of these talks (Liang, X., n. d).

Singapore Summit: The summit was organized in Singapore between North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and former US President Donald Trump. It was aimed at narrowing the bridge on issue of denuclearization of North Korea. Both pledged to exercise their importance for creation of peaceful regional environment. However, North Korea wanted to acquire international legitimacy for its nuclear program, positive image of its nations with international forums and concessions on sanctions imposed by USA. These negotiations did not evolve further and eventually no result was emerged (Cha, V. & Terry, S.M). In case of Iran, multiple rounds of negotiations were arranged in Geneva with different group of countries. The aim of these negotiations was to limit civil nuclear program of Iran and make sufficient arrangements for international transparency measurements.

EU3 Rounds: These talks were organized between Iran and the three member states of European Union such as Britain, Germany and France. These states offered significant number of proposals to resolve the nuclear issue of Iran. The talks were held during 2003 to 2005 at IAEA headquarter in Geneva. The direction about maintaining regional security, resolution of economic sanctions and safety of the nuclear material was also significantly analyzed during these talks (Davenport, K., 2023). This forum was remained still on finding proposals and did not evolve a significant result.

P5+1 Negotiations: The USA, China and Russia joined the three EU countries to expand the membership of EU3. The platform renamed as P5+1 proposals. As a result of various negotiations Iran suspended its nuclear program and decided to cooperate with P5+1 nations to find a reliable guarantee to lift the economic sanctions earlier imposed by USA. Several rounds of negotiations were arranged until 2013. Iran presented a broad based comprehensive plan for future talks to frame end-state settlement/agreement (Davenport, K., 2023).

Joint Plan of Action 2013: After several rounds of negotiations since 2005 between P5+1 countries and Iran, an interim agreement was reached in November 2013. Under this interim agreement, specific steps were proposed to be implemented by Iran and P5+1 countries. In response to ease of economic sanctions, Iran halted its uranium enrichment, safety in research and development and also provided detail about the existing functioning sites of nuclear program (Davenport, K., 2023).

Iran Nuclear Deal: The agreement was signed between P5+1 countries and Iran in July 2015. According to this Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran took several initiatives to halt its nuclear program in exchange ease of economic sanctions by USA and EU countries. The proponents of this nuclear deal hoped of the revival of regional peace in Middle East. Iran also open its nuclear sites for IAEA inspection. However, in 2018, former US President Donald Trump withdrew from the deal on the ground that Iran still violating the agreement as the state still making such missiles which have the capability of carry nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the concerns have developed that Iran again started its nuclear program since 2020 (Robinson, K., 2023).

Conclusion

Since 1950s, Iran and North Korea took almost seventy years since for pursuing the nuclear program for making strategic deterrence in their regions. Both states established every possible agreement/treaty and joint ventures to secure strategic weapons. In all this scenario, fear dilemma remained at the extreme level. As the states do not try to establish cordial relations with its neighboring states or with international community. The survival of the political regime was also an integrated option to establish national security. In all these scenarios, both states compelled itself that survival is possible only, when they establish and consequentially acquire strategic nuclear program. Finally, North Korea acquired self-proclaimed nuclear status in 2006. Until the recent times, the state too demonstrated nuclear explosions for six times. While Iran halted its nuclear program time and again due to the incentive in response of negotiations. It started nuclearization when it conceived that their national interests are secured by the regional and international actors. In case of the two countries, hardline decision making prevailed while advocating their nuclear aspirations. Again North Korea strived from the beginning for mounting nuclear power and still maintained the same wishes. In its second nuclear doctrine, North Korea implored that, it will have first strike motives if the state feels any fear and threat to their sovereignty. This is an orthodox doctrine which shows that the state regime wants to establish regional fear at any cost for the survival of their regime. In case of Iran, both optimistic and pessimistic trends prevailed in their aspirations. The state focused on diplomacy regarding the decision for starting or halting the nuclear program. However, the trends show that, there is still possibility of denuclearized regime in Iran if multi-lateral diplomatic channels involve in this

process with bold decisions, agreement and finally in establishing composite international treaty.

Nuclear program of Iran and North Korea is still a serious concern for the international community. It has multiples the fear syndrome and insecurity in Middle East and East Asia. There are serious issues which are involved in developing this program in Iran and North Korea. There is need to understand the national narratives of these states for reaching upon any solution which paved for denuclearization. Present is not right, however, there is hope that there may emerge any possibility to make compact decisions on denuclearization of Iran and North Korea.

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