

**NORTH KOREAN PROVOCATIONS
AMID CHINA-US COMPETITION**

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EAI Background Brief No. 1213

Date of Publication: 19 January 2017

Executive Summary

1. The two great powers of the United States and China, albeit with focus or priority differences, will be able to set aside differences for the sake of denuclearisation and the building of a peace regime (or a peace treaty) on the Korean Peninsula.
2. So far, they are able to sidestep North Korea's attempts to exploit China-US competition and create room of cooperation for curbing Pyongyang's nuclear ambition.
3. In 2016, the United States and China had worked together to draft unprecedentedly strict UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions in response to North Korea's two nuclear tests on 6 January and 9 September.
4. The UNSC resolutions, in particular UNSC resolution 2321's ceiling of North Korea's export of coal (US\$400,870,018 or 7,500,000 metric tonnes, whichever is lower), will limit North Korea's earnings to a significant extent. The United States and China will be able to narrow down the differences on how to achieve both denuclearisation and the building of a peace regime (or a peace treaty).
5. The United States, China and South and North Korea had linked the two issues at the inter-Korean agreements in 1991, Geneva Agreed Framework in 1994, Four-Party Talks from 1997 to 1999 and Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks in 2005. In 2016, John Kerry's and Wang Yi's statements showed a possibility of reviving the link between denuclearisation and a peace treaty.
6. One of the most challenging tests to China-US cooperation, in relation to North Korea's nuclear advancement, is the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) issue. China has strongly opposed Washington and Seoul's July 2016 decision for the THAAD deployment on Korean soil.

7. The United States and South Korea maintain that the THAAD deployment is for deterring North Korean attacks, an argument that China did not buy. There is hence a need to open dialogue on this issue.
8. North Korea is a small power where drastic military actions may not be necessary; however, the two great powers will need to further cooperate on restricting North Korea's exploitation of China-US dynamics and curtailing its ambition to become a nuclear-weapons state.
9. Together with the full implementation of UNSC sanctions, the relevant parties including the United States and China could consider opening dialogues with North Korea on how to tie denuclearisation with establishing a peace treaty. With close cooperation, the two great powers will be able to overcome their conflicting views of the strategic balance surrounding the Korean peninsula.