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The Guam Threat

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The US-North Korea ties are on perpetual perils. The two nations have, however, never developed into a full-scale fight. The twists and turns that exist have been governing their ties since the 1950s. North Korea also possesses nuclear arms and war heads. Some of its weapons are even – reportedly – more sophisticated than American weapons. There is no doubt that North Korea has the capability to strike the vital American interests in the Pacific. Question arises that if North Korea is so frustrated what still prevents it to attack the American vital interests in the Pacific?

The latest warning came from Pyongyang on 9 August saying that the Government is planning to attack with Hwasong-14 missiles the Island of Guam in the Western Pacific – an American possession – around 6400 km from Western Hawaii. With a population of 160,000, the island is 338 sq. km and a key to strong US military post to look after its interests in the Asia-Pacific particularly toward Japan, Korean Peninsula, the Philippines and Indo-China.

The island is 1,600 km away from Japan and it is a popular resort beach for Japanese visitors round the year. From North Korea the distance is around 2100 km, which means the territory is within the easy reach of North Korean missile attack. The North Korean missiles

could reach Guam within 18 minutes after crossing Japanese air space of Shimane, Hiroshima, and Koichi prefectures.

But America protects its Pacific territories well. The last threat to them came from the Japanese during World War II when America lost three thousands soldiers in 1941. The North Korean threat would be well calculated by Washington and the blunder of Hawaii might not be repeated. The reaction could be much stronger than expected. President Donald Trump threatened to respond to further threats from North Korea by unleashing “fire and fury like the world has never seen.”

The American Hawaii and Guam approach also determines its ties with Japan and also has a great impact on the Indo-China with reference to the Vietnam War. With the same angle, America also defines its ties with the Korean Peninsula, Straits of Taiwan and mainland China. Therefore, Guam is vital for the American geo-strategic policy and any perceived or actual threat means a lot to America. It heavily relies on its Guam doctrine in the Asia-Pacific and created a number of allies. A threat to Guam means a threat to vital American interests in the Pacific.

North Korea said it was carefully finalising plans to fire four intermediate-range missiles into waters 18 to 25 miles from Guam. This would bring the North Korea into total war with the United States. The US installed THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) in South Korea that can fail the launch of North Korean missiles on Guam.

China’s policy toward North Korea has been fully exhausted. China objects any such launch by North Korea on who it relies over its 90 percent of trade. China declares to support UN sanctions on North Korea. In case China’s interests were jeopardised because of the situation between North Korea and the United States, China would act by its own. In their war, China might stand out neutral.

Under the July 11, 1961 Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which obliges China to intervene if North Korea is subject to unprovoked aggression, but not necessarily if Pyongyang starts a war with any power. Frustrated with North Korean continuous international peace defiance, China has been considering to review the treaty.

China knew that the treaty had provided an atmosphere to North Korea to develop its nuclear program. Chinese policy and objection are contrary to North Korean vital national interests and they are alarming-bells. It is also absolutely clear to Europe, America, Japan, South Korea, and Australia that China has neither been backing the Pyongyang regime nor it has been acting on behalf of China. These are North Korean solo actions.

North Korea did not back down from its threat. It reiterated that it would wait little more before launching missiles on Guam. It looks that Pyongyang is making a “silly and un-calculated” move on Guam.

North Korea itself holds the key to solution. North Korea tries to settle dispute over nuclear and missile programs, improves relations with its ally, China, normalises relations with South Korea, and ends enmity with Japan. North Korea’s reliance on “gun-boat diplomacy”

would not pay it off. North Korea needs to come out of its self-created isolation. It can build its economy and China is there to help it out. A prosperous North Korea is in the interest of China but it has little option to converse Pyongyang's policy toward the United States or play the role of a mediator between them.

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