CHAPTER IV
NORTH KOREA-CHINA: AN ASYMMETRIC ALLIANCE

The aim of this chapter is to examine the North Korean threat perceptions in the context of Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory. The theory argues that states actually react to perceived threat and not to power and aim to balance it. To balance its threat North Korea developed an alliance system with the People's Republic of China. The nature of the alliance between North Korea and China is explained and determined by their attitudes towards South Korea and the United States. The main foci of this chapter will be on the period between 1980 and 2000 as relations between North Korea and China before and after the Cold War present two different pictures.

The geographic location of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter DPRK) is of strategic importance to the East Asian powers. North Korea is surrounded by four big powers: China, Russia, Japan, and the United States. The East Asian region is also a region of vital importance for America's economy and national interest. The US had a vested interest in keeping noncommunist Asia and, therefore, Korea out of the reach of the Soviet Union and China. North Korea perceives the US policy towards itself, the strengthening of the US-South Korea security cooperation and the US deployment of advanced weapons in Seoul as posing serious threatening challenges. The DPRK also cited its threat perceptions arising out of the statements by the US leaders and the actions taken by them to guarantee the security of South Korea. In the North Korean view, the US and its ally, South Korea are a serious threat to North Korea.

Based on these perceptions of security threat, North Korea is pursuing a number of security policies. It is redesigning and developing its security policy and putting emphasis on improving its military capability. It has enhanced its arms buildup and increased its nuclear and missile capability in order to match South Korea in military capability. To defend itself against this threat, North Korea was supported by two major powers: China and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

This chapter aims to cover the overall nature and changing dimension of North Korea's perception of threat from South Korea and the US. It examines its alignment with China, taking into account the different factors enumerated by Stephen Walt that
affect the level of threat: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions. Its effort is to examine the development of tension in the relationship between the North and the South on the one hand and the DPRK-US on the other. Nuclear and missile tensions in DPRK-US relations have been examined in this chapter and North Korea’s actions to enhance its ability to resist the influence of the US has been analysed. The role of the erstwhile Soviet Union and Japan has also been analyzed to the extent it had a bearing on the above issue. The various sources of North Korea’s capability in an attempt to counter these threats have been analysed. Finally the behaviour of the Sino-DPRK, which is an unequal alliance against a common adversary, will also be examined.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to a brief discussion of the Korean War and the evolution of alliance partnerships in the East Asian region. After presenting an overview of the situation, the second part takes into account the major sources of North Korea’s insecurity from 1950 to 1979 and its responses to its perceived threats in this period. It is against this background that the North Korea-China relations between 1980 and 2000 have been analysed. The third section deals with the actions taken by North Korea with special reference to China. It expounds how Pyongyang’s high threat perception has resulted in its alignment with China. This section is periodized in two parts:

a. *The 1980s* – This was the period when various conflicts between North and South Korea on the one hand and North Korea and the US on the other resulted in North Korea feeling threatened by the South Korea-US alliance and consequently, the Sino-North Korea relationship thrived.

b. *The 1990s* – This phase witnesses significant changes in North Korea’s threat perception from the South Korea-US alliance which, in turn, has a tremendous
countries. All of Korea was associated with the Chinese Manchu Empire until 1895. The tributary relations between China and Korea came to an end when China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95. The Korean War of 1950-53 reminded China of the importance of Korea to its national security. Culturally (in terms of the Confucian legacy), ideologically and socially, Korea (in this case North Korea) belonged to the Chinese zone of influence. With China as the model, she tried to approximate and then copy the Chinese prototype.

China has been a long-standing ally of North Korea. Common threat perceptions alone would have argued for a cooperative arrangement between these two countries. Their relationship is cemented by a security agreement. North Korea was one of the few countries that established diplomatic relations with the PRC after it was founded. Chinese and North Korean leaders have common views on many issues. Both believe in the one party system, both take state sovereignty and political independence seriously, both consider the principle of non-interference as the most important guideline and both regard the American system as a challenge to their national security. In passing, it may be mentioned that the relationship between the PRC and North Korea has never been based on equality. North Korea has always been China's junior and weak partner. China was vast, powerful, economically strong and therefore the dominant one. Therefore, as far as China was concerned, North Korea's loyalty and affiliation was not vital for it. However, North Korea's protection of China and its support has been indispensable. Hence, it was a partnership not between equals but between two unequal states, one strong and powerful and the other-a client.

I

An overview: Korean peninsula, hub of balance of power in East Asia

Much of Korea's history is 'the story of its struggle, not always successful, to maintain its independence against external pressures' (Barnett 1960: 287). The Korean peninsula has been a geopolitical center for the world powers. It has been a place where great powers have competed for political influence and economic interests. The Second World War divided Korea into North and South at the thirty-eighth parallel. Ever since the two rival governments were established in 1948, relations between them have been marked by mutual distrust, competition, confrontation and conflict. The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ),
contrary to its name is located within one of the world's most heavily militarized areas. There is little 'strategic depth' between the DMZ and the capital cities of Pyongyang, which is about 125 km north of the DMZ, and Seoul which is approximately 40 km south of the DMZ.

DPRK's foreign policy can be characterized by its attempt to maintain good relations with the socialist countries. The beginning of each successive decade saw some developments regarding politics in East Asia. For the sake of understanding the various dimensions of crises on the peninsula leading to increase in North Korean threat perception, it must be studied from the vantage point of the North Korean decision makers. The beginning of the 1950s was jolted by the outbreak of the Korean War. This radically altered the perceptions of the leaders of North Korea, China and the US. During the Korean War, the alliance structure was established.

The Korean War
The War began on 25 June 1950 when North Korea invaded the South. As its consequence, the two countries, the US and China became open adversaries and antagonists. Following the consolidation of Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe and the signing of 'Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance', the US perceived, the consequences of a South Korean defeat would be highly detrimental to its own political and strategic interests. China intervened in the war to stop the US forces from controlling the entire peninsula.

From the Chinese point of view, the loss of Korea to the US could not allow to go unchallenged. China perceived the Korean tangle as follows. The US renewed its support to the Nationalists who continued to question the legitimacy of the new communist regime on the mainland. Predictably, China reacted with anger accusing the Americans of aggression. It considered American postures a direct threat to its security and sovereignty. As the Korean War progressed and the UN forces began to fight their way northward, Beijing became alarmed about the possibility of a total defeat of North Korea, which China considered a buffer essential to its own security. It warned the US that if it crossed the 38th parallel, which divided North and South Korea, China would not stand idly by it and it would respond. The Chinese leaders had concluded that an intervention in Korean War would temper and caution Washington, whereas inaction would embolden it. Not
long after, American troops crossed the 38th parallel and moved towards the Chinese border, and the first Chinese ‘volunteers’ entered Korea. With this, the Korean War turned into a US-China military conflict. Till mid-1953 the US and China fought a major war which created deep feelings of mutual hostility. The bitter fighting created deep and lasting scars on both sides. As Mao Tse-Tung said,

‘For us the present situation is different from that in the winter of 1950. Were the US aggressors then on the other side of the 38th parallel? No they were not. They were on the other side of the Yalu and Tumen rivers. Did we have any experience in fighting the US aggressors? No we did not. Did we then know much about the US troops? No we did not. Now all this has changed’ (Mao 1977: 117-118).

The Chinese intervention provided an opportunity to make North Korea a buffer state along China’s north-eastern border. North Korea also felt an indispensable need of an ally during the planning for the Korean War. China’s role in Korea in the early 1950s gave it great power status. As a counterweight to this, South Korea depends on the United States for security. The US has been South Korea’s closest ally. The US maintains military bases there. The Mutual Security Treaty of 1953 is the formal basis of security cooperation between the South Korea and the United States. Since the conclusion of the mutual defense treaty, it became clear that the US is strongly committed to remain South Korea’s protector from the North Korean military threats. It is the US and not South Korea, which is the signatory power of the Korean armistice agreement. Security cooperation between the two allies cannot be any closer.

The cease-fire agreement of 1953 that brought the Korean War of 1950 to 1953 to an end comprises the first confidence building measures between both parts of Korea. These include the setting up of a demilitarized zone measuring two kilometers in width on either side of the border and the establishment of a cease-fire commission and a military committee to monitor the agreement. The Korean War ended, but the peninsula remained divided at the demilitarized zone. The brief history of the two states on the peninsula makes clear that the region has been an area of military confrontation where the four great powers, the US, the USSR, China and Japan were directly involved. With this background the process of alliance building started.
North Korea's active diplomacy in the 1960s

The decade of the 1960's witnessed increasing tension in the peninsula. For North Korea this period symbolized the age of search for self-reliance in every walk of life. This was the period when the idea of Juche (self-reliance) was emphasized. In this phase, the North Korean emphasis had been on immediate economic and cultural exchanges between two parts of Korea ultimately leading to the formation of an all-Korean confederation by peaceful means (Rhee 1984: 56). On 14 August 1960, DPRK Premier Kim II Sung proposed that the North and the South form a 'confederation' as a transitional step towards reunification (Kim 1977: 186). Later, North Korea had concentrated mainly on the political agitation anticipating mass revolts in South and had attempted to take the advantage of the unrest. It encouraged the South Korean masses to 'share the fruits of socialist construction in the North' (Kim 1977: 189).

In South Korea, a student uprising and the consequent collapse of the First Republic took place in 1960. By that time North Korea decided to exploit the negative feelings against the political regimentation in the South. But a military coup and the collapse of the civilian government of the Second Republic in 1961 forced North Korea to re-evaluate its strategy. Following this military revolution in the South, two months after the coup, Kim II Sung signed official alliance treaties with China and the Soviet Union pledging friendly cooperation and mutual assistance (Morrison and Suhrke 1978: 16). Two states, namely the Congo and Mauritania that had diplomatic relations with the ROK agreed to establish relations with North Korea in 1963. When it did so, the ROK invoked the 'Hallstein Doctrine'\(^1\), i.e., doctrine of no relations with any state having relations with North Korea (Gills 1996: 105). Thus North Korea gained two supporters at the expense of the ROK. The political disagreement between the Soviet Union and China after 1960 meant that North Korea was no longer able to rely on both the countries in the same manner.

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\(^1\) The Hallstein doctrine named after Walter Hallstein, was a key doctrine in the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) between 1955 and 1969. It was supported by the Christian Democratic Party. According to the doctrine, the Federal Republic of Germany had the exclusive right to represent the entire German nation, and with the exception of the Soviet Union, West Germany could not establish or maintain diplomatic relations with any state that recognized East Germany. The doctrine was first applied to Yugoslavia in 1957. East Germany attempted to undermine this doctrine by forming diplomatic relationships with the newly decolonized nations of the Third World. For decades, the PRC, based in mainland China, and the Republic of China (ROC), based in Taiwan, applied a similar policy upon each other. Both claimed to speak for the entire nation of China and did not establish diplomatic relations with any country that had diplomatic relations with the opposing side. Accessed 6 June 07, URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallstein_Doctrine.
Sino-American rapprochement and DPRK

The most significant step in the changing pattern of relations in East Asian politics had been the Sino-American rapprochement. President Nixon announced that he would make a trip to Beijing in 1972. This rapprochement threatened to shake the foundations of the North Korean foreign policy. It referred to the proposed visit as 'not the march of a victor but a trip of the defeated' (Chung 1978: 139). It became the underlying factor in the initiation of the dialogue between North and South Korea. This was because the DPRK was still in a potential state of war with the US. In the past China had been their most important ally in defence against an American invasion. The North Korean insecurity intensified when Deng Xioping established diplomatic relations with the US in 1978.

The PRC still calls the Korean War a war of aggression that the imperialists launched to strangle the new People's Republic. The Chinese performance in Korea is still publicly exalted as 'a world miracle in which the weak vanquished the strong' (Kim 2002: 12). Developments in North Korea were very significant for PRC. The relationship between North Korea and China was cooperative in nature as the DPRK was the PRC's last socialist ally. Beijing leaders had very often commented that the DPRK is a shield for their strategy in East Asia.

II

Major security concerns until 1979

States enter into alliances to enhance security. History and geography explain why North Korea needed allies. It had two allies while the South had one. The alliance partners, the Soviet Union and China were geographically close to North Korea but the US was far away from the South. The two alliances had different ideological characteristics. This made Pyongyang and Seoul inclined to set different policies with regard to their security.

Threat perceptions: The North Korean perspective

The US threat

Although the US is located far away from Asia, it is involved in Hot and Cold Wars of the East Asian region. The significance of the Korean problem for the US is that Washington wanted to consolidate its position in the region, as there was a possibility that China and Japan might emerge as the new political powers of East Asia. The hostility
between the US and North Korea worsened when the Korean War broke out in 1950. North Koreans harbor a very deep grudge against the US for two main reasons: the division of Korea and the American occupation of the Southern part of Korea from 1945 to 1948. From the North Korean point of view it is a source of tension. North Koreans resent other American actions taken since 1953, the mutual security agreement with South Korea and the maintenance of 36,000 American troops in South Korea.

The US treated North Korea as a mere satellite of the Soviet Union because the latter did not accept the US proposal to establish a self-reliant independent nation through free elections under the supervision of the United Nations. Then the relationship between the US and North Korea developed to take the form of ideological confrontation i.e., capitalism vs. socialism. In the eyes of the US, Kim Il-Sung’s regime was an adversary of the free world and also a political force opposing and threatening US policies towards the Korean peninsula. Therefore the US strengthened its relationship with South Korea and countered North Korea. It made sure that the United Nations defined the North Korean regime as the aggressor, thereby accelerating the efforts to have North Korea further isolated both economically and diplomatically. By concluding the US-Japan Security Pact in 1951 and the South Korea-U.S. Mutual Defence Treaty 1953, the US organized bilateral security systems to counter the threat of the expansion of communist forces in Asia including North Korea. Every US President since Eisenhower reiterated a public pledge to honour the US treaty regarding its commitment to South Korea’s security (Lee 1993: 34).

The South Korean threat

The hostility between North Korea and South Korea is not only mutual but evenly matched. Both keep massive military forces. This hostility is rooted in the dynamics of Cold War. It was the confrontation of the different social systems, ideology, struggle for power and several other factors. The North Korean version of history argues that the Democratic People’s Republic in the North is the only legitimate government representing the entire Korean people and that it was American “imperialism” and its creature, the South Korean regime that prevented unification. In North Korean perception, the US, South Korea and Japan want the South to absorb the North. The presence of the US force poses a threat that Washington and Seoul will provoke a new
war for occupying the North. This perception of a South Korean threat is reinforced by the fact that the Korean War has never formally come to an end. As its consequence the relations between North and South remain almost frozen. The objective of North Korea is the reunification of the Korean peninsula on its own terms.

On the other hand, since 1948 South Korean policy towards North Korea has been its claim that as the Republic of Korea, it is the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula and the regime in Pyongyang is illegitimate. The US declared on 12 August 1948, that the government in Seoul was "the Korean government" and established formal diplomatic ties with it (Quinones 2001: 21). Subsequent action by the US and its allies in the UN defined the basic parameters of ROK-US policy towards North Korea. The ROK came to be viewed by most of the nations allied with the US as the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula. In 1950s and 1960s South Korea tried to undo North Korea with the help of the UN though neither North Korea nor South Korea was a member of the organization. The aim was to isolate North Korea diplomatically and commercially from the international mainstream. As its result North Korea found military and economic benefit in its alliance with the Communist bloc. And as its result the rivalry between the two Koreas intensified.

South Korean economy had developed much more successfully than that of the North. This dynamic growth transformed the balance of power on the peninsula in South's favour. The year 1965 was a turning point in the North-South competition. The ROK normalized relations with Japan in 1965, signing what North Korea considered being a separate peace (Gills 1996: 108). It raised fears in Pyongyang of Japanese economic and political influence on the Korean peninsula as well as the perception that South Korea would gain rapid growth in economy. In his report to the Korean Worker's Party's Representatives' Conference held on 5 October 1966, Kim Il Sung claimed that the ROK posed a real and immanent threat, and aided by the US and Japan, was preparing 'a new invasion of North Korea' (Kim 1977: 219). Under the new regime of President Park Chung Hee, the developmental strategy of South Korea changed. American investment flowed into South Korea. In 1974, the total GNP of South Korea reached $ 17.16 billion, whereas that of North Korea was only $ 4.82 billion (Rhee 1984: 11).
There was an arms race between the two Koreas. The military balance on the peninsula showed that South Korea maintained a strong military alliance with the US. The US and South Korean forces modernized and strengthened their military capabilities, while North Korean forces suffered from economic deprivation, obsolete equipment, poor maintenance and inadequate training. Due to economic decline, lack of financial resources as well as force improvements in South Korea and the US, North Korea's conventional forces became relatively weaker. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) estimates that during the period 1967-1976, arms transferred to the North amounted to a total of US $ 771 million while the comparable figure for the South was US $ 2625 million (Ho 1981: 854). There was a prospect that the South would achieve a superiority vis-à-vis the North. This prospect of the South becoming superior was perceived by the North as threatening, thus, further intensifying the arms race. Thus, according to North Korean perception, South Korea intended to superimpose its power over the North by establishing economic and conventional military superiority.

**US, Japan and the ROK alliance as a threat**

Kim Il Sung did not conceal his perception of threat from the normalization of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. The North Korean regime's official statements had termed the ROK-Japan rapprochement as the first step toward the formation of an alleged anti-communist military alliance. The conclusion of the ROK-Japan Basic Treaty was signed on 22 June 1965, appeared to the North Korean regime as the start of a 'tripartite military alliance' between the US, Japan and the ROK. The DPRK threat perception was further driven by the escalation of the Vietnam War of 1965. It was perplexed by the deployment of the ROK army to Vietnam. In the report 'Current Situation and the Task for Our Party' on 5 October 1966, Kim Il Sung criticized 'American imperialists' and 'Japanese militarism' in relation to the Vietnam War. His perception of threat is reflected in his saying that 'a trilateral military alliance has been formed among US imperialism, the Sato government of Japan and the South Korean puppet cliques' (as cited in Hamm 1999: 73).
**Nuclear threat**

The holistic understanding of North Korean perception of nuclear threat cannot be understood without looking at it historically. From Pyongyang's point of view, long and unbroken period of American nuclear hegemony in East Asia was interpreted as a clear threat to its security. North Korea is the only country in the developing world, which faced a direct threat from a superpower's nuclear weapons from its very inception (Spector and Smith 1990: 119).

Bruce Cumings writes that North Korean behaviour is an understandable response to the fundamentally irresponsible and reprehensible nuclear policy that the US has pursued for three decades. On July 17, 1950, General Douglas Mac Arthur suggested in a top-secret conference that he planned to destroy North Korea and block Chinese and Soviet involvement by using atomic bomb (Kapur 1995: 17). In November 1950, President Henry Truman threatened North Korea for the same. Even in February 1953, Eisenhower argued in National Security Council meeting in favour of nuclear weapons as a cheaper and effective option. North Korea was threatened by the US nuclear bombs from the very beginning, which has had its impact on the North Korean nuclear policy formulation. It seemed to have affected the North Korean psyche and has ultimately led to a nuclear weapon action programme. North Korea fears psychosis due to American bomb reinforces this development (Mayer 1984: 56-60).

After Korea had been divided, the US and Soviet regimes in their respective occupation zones skewed its polarized politics further. The US publicly announced its intentions to introduce nuclear weapons to the ROK on 16 July 1957, and on 29 January 1958, it further announced the actual deployment of nuclear weapons by the US forces in South Korea (Satterwhite 1996: 27). The doctrine of deterrence served as ample justification to the US for their deployment, yet their very presence, and the manner in which battlefield exercises practiced their probable use, were perceived by the DPRK as overt, nuclear backed threats to its very existence (Satterwhite 1996). In 1974, the US reaffirmed the Korea-US Mutual Defense Agreement, confirming that it would extend prompt and effective assistance to South Korea should it come under aggression.
North Korean threat perceptions increased when South Korea allegedly tried to make the bomb during the 1970s. The South Koreans decided to adopt the nuclear weapons' path and started negotiating with the France in 1972 for acquiring reprocessing facilities. But it joined the NPT and signed the safeguards agreement with the IAEA in 1975. President Park stated in June 1975 that 'South Korea would and could develop its own nuclear weapons if the US nuclear umbrella is withdrawn' (Kwak and Patterson 1986: 110). On 29 January 1977, Park declared that South Korea would not develop nuclear arms. Later on South Korea tried to procure reprocessing from Canada. It came into conflict with its security guarantor US on this issue. The South Korean-Canadian project had to be abandoned in 1984 (Kapur 1995: 22). The US government had been critical of French and Canadian sales of nuclear technology to South Korea. From North Korea's perspective, South Korea's nuclear weapons capability was far ahead of North Korea. South Korea had a strong civilian nuclear development programme, and Pyongyang perceived that Seoul had the capability of converting commercial nuclear technology into nuclear weapons. Therefore, according to North Korea it constituted a potential threat to its security.

To summarize, in the decade of the 1960s, three factors were mainly responsible for the increasing threat perceptions of North Korea. They were: the escalation of the Vietnam War and the South Korean involvement in it, the normalization of relations between South Korea and Japan, and a spectacular economic growth of South Korea under the leadership of Park Chung Hee. Some important factors converged that could explain the North Korean decision to obtain a nuclear option: the US nuclear threats against North Korea and the fact that South Korea was pursuing its own nuclear weapon after 1971 came to light in 1975. The North was also aware of the role of South Korean forces in US nuclear delivery operations in Korea. North Korea was aware that it was facing increased conventional offensive military power in the South.

Thus North Korea faced a serious challenge from the changes occurring in Asian and world politics. The major issues were the US-Chinese relations, Japan's relations with Moscow and Beijing, a possibility of Japanese rearmament, China's domestic politics, Pyongyang's economic and political situation, Beijing and Moscow's policies towards South Korea etc. The US and the Republic of Korea had strategic alliance; China
and the People's Republic of Korea also had a kind of special relationship. Yet, DPRK and PRC perceived ROK as an American client regime and a US base from which the US “imperialists” could launch an invasion against China and North Korea (Lee and Mansbach 1993: 159).

North Korean responses
To cope with the perceived threat, the North Korean regime concentrated its energies on how to unify the peninsula on its own terms. Its primary concern was to prepare itself against possible military provocation from the US and South Korea. In the 1950’s and 1960’s South Korea tried to undo North Korea with the help of the United Nations. Though neither of them was a member of organization, the 1970s can be characterized as a North Korean attempt to sideline South Korea by using the NAM platform. In 1975, at the NAM conference at Lima in Peru, North Korea got the membership of NAM whereas the South Korean appeal was rejected.

It viewed the US as the strongest imperialistic force. From the ideological viewpoint, North Korea stressed its hatred of US imperialism in the context of the movement of the Socialist International, while maintaining hostility against the US militarily and diplomatically within the framework of the alliance with the Soviet Union and China. In his speech at the 10th anniversary of the August 15 Liberation in 1955, after the termination of the Korean War, North Korean President Kim Il-Sung said, ‘The American imperialists established a puppet regime in South Korea in order to perpetually split Korea, thus carrying out colonialist exploitation policies and totally destroying the construction of a democratic unified state’ (Han 1987). At the same time, North Korea presented the Juche idea (self-reliance), with which it developed the antagonistic anti-US campaign. The anti-US policy lines of North Korea were closely related to its demand for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea.

How to counter the South Korean military threat had been the prime concern of North Korean policies toward the South. In 1968, North Korea launched a series of violent operations directed against South Korea. On 21 January 1968, a thirty-one member North Korean commando team attacked the Presidential residence in Seoul with the mission of assassinating President Park (Hon-ok 1998: 83). The targets were not
limited to South Korea. On 23 January 1968, the North Koreans seized the US naval ship Pueblo in Wonsan Bay, and a 120 men guerilla team landed on the east coast at Uljin. The North Koreans shot down a US EC-121 reconnaissance aircraft over the East Sea (Rhee 1984: 146). On 15 April 1969, a US Navy reconnaissance plane assigned to Atsuki Air Base in Japan was shot down by two North Korean MiG fighters (Hon-ok 1998: 83). In 1976 another controversy surfaced which made North Korea-US relations more strained and that was the ‘axe of August incident’. In this crisis, North Korean soldiers killed two American officers with axes during a popular tree cutting job in Panmunjom, a neutral zone in the DMZ (Kim 1993: 292-293).

The strategy followed by DPRK to achieve its goals can be defined as, ‘the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy’ (Hart 1967: 335).

**Internal balancing: military expenditure**

It is difficult to estimate North Korea’s military expenditures, as it is a society tightly closed to the outside world. According to Hamm, North Korean defense expenditure, which was less than South Korea in first decade (1950-1960), gradually increased defense expenditure in South Korea (Hamm 1999: 78-79). The estimates available suggest that in 1961, North had spent only 2.6 percent of its total budget for military purposes. In 1964 it spent 5.8 percent, in 1965, 8 percent, and in 1966, 10 percent. Suddenly, in 1967, the North Korean government allocated 30.4 percent of its total budget for military purposes (Rhee 1984: 13-14). Since 1972, North Korea allocated about 16 percent of its budget for the military. According to the US, ACDA, since 1974 the South has been outspending the North militarily. But in view of the recent US intelligence data that show North Korean military strength have been underestimated. North Korea is believed to have devoted at least 15 percent to 20 percent of its GNP to military expenditures in the 1960s and as much as 25 percent to 30 percent in the 1970s (Ho 1981: 853). It is also known that the North devotes a much higher percentage to the acquisition of arms and equipments.

**Internal balancing: military programmes**

North Korea endeavored to expand its military strength. Since the Korean War (1950-1953) its security and defense policy had been based on two primary objectives: a. safeguarding survival of the nation and its leadership, b. reunifying both parts of Korea.
under North Korean control. These objectives were being pursued through the ‘four military lines’. The ‘four military lines’ were announced as a new central tenet for military policy at the 5th sitting of the Central Committee of the Communist Worker’s Party at the end of 1962. (Schmidt 2002: 3). This called for:

1. Arming of the entire population
2. Fortifications of the entire country
3. Professional training of all soldiers
4. Modernization of weapons

These programmes were military policy programmes. For the defense of the northern revolutionary base, Kim called for a two-sided intensification of the defense effort under the slogan, ‘Let us couple economic construction with military construction’ in 1966 (Kim 1977: 219). He also admitted that, due to the need to increase military spending, the Seven-Year Plan (1961-67) would be extended for three years (Kim 1977: 219). Pursuant to this military line, the North Korean regime stressed slogans such as “the fortification of the whole country”, “armament of all people”, “the modernization of the army”, and “upgrading of quality of the people’s army”. In order to implement these slogans, the North Korean defense budget was raised, in 1967 when the share of national defense to the total national budget increased to 30.4 percent from 10 percent for the previous year (Kim 1977: 219). The North also attempted to minimize its population disadvantage by lowering the military service age to 16 and its proportion of working age males in regular armed forces to 16 percent. About 30 percent of the population aged between 15 and 60 years played some form of active part in the military defense of North Korea. Thus North Korea changed its policy from defensive to offensive including irregular warfare against the South in the 1960s.

In case of conventional weapons, North Korea’s strategic shift from gradual military buildups to rapid buildups was motivated mainly by its threat perception. DPRK modified its defence policy and military doctrine. For North Korea, the period (1953 to 1960) belongs to rebuilding, repairing, and even enhancing its capabilities. In this respect, it first concentrated on its air force. The DPRK introduced MIG-15 Jet fighters from China immediately after the Armistice (Hamm 1999: 69). By the end of 1975, North Korea had significant air superiority over South Korea. It had a force of about 1000
combat aircrafts while South had over 200 (Rhee 1984: 128). By 1976, North Korea maintained 567,000 men in the three branches of the armed forces, while South Korea maintained 625,000 (Rhee 1984: 204). Although South Korea outnumbered the North in manpower strength, its troops were not as well equipped as North Korea’s. The North had about 2,000 tanks as of 1977 compared with South Korea’s 1000. According to the US government, in 1977 North Korea had 1,850 medium tanks including 900 T-54/55/59, 100 light tanks and 750 APCs (Rhee 1984: 205). In 1970, DPRK had only 82 transportation airplanes. As of January 1976, this figure rose to 270, including 203 AN-2s, 54 MI-4s helicopters, and 12 MI-8s helicopters (Rhee 1984: 206). The table 4.1 shows the comparative study of military capability between North and South Korea by the end of 1982.
Table 4.1
Military Capability, North and South Korea (As of the end of 1982)

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<th>South Korea</th>
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<td>Armed Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>total active</td>
<td>622,000</td>
<td>782,000 (784,500)</td>
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<tr>
<td>army</td>
<td>540,000</td>
<td>700,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>navy</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>31,000 (33,500)</td>
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<tr>
<td>air force</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>51,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>reserves</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>2,660,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ground Forces</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>infantry division</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30 (35)</td>
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<tr>
<td>tank division</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motorized rifle div.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>mechanized div.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>infantry brigade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>armored brigade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special combat brg.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special mission brg.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM brigade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ind. tank regiment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ind. infantry regiment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSM battalion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artillery battalion</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>330 (250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reserve inf-div.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanks</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APC/BMP</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gun/howitzer</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>6,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSM</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total combat ships</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>submarines</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destroyers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frigates</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missile boats</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast assault crafts</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total tonnage</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>91,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marine divisions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marine brigades</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total combat planes</td>
<td>434 (450)</td>
<td>778 (740)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bombers</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>84 (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fighter-bombers</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>694 (670)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>307 (270)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Korea's nuclear objective was to produce a counter response to South Korea. Apart from this, it wanted to counter South Korean superiority in conventional arms and a small nuclear arsenal could be a good insurance against it (Sun 1991: 475). Nuclear weapons offer North Korea a countervailing deterrent against the perceived threat of the US nuclear weapons and an equalizer to balance the growing military power of the South.

North Korean nuclear programme had been conceptualized in 1940s itself in which the USSR played a significant role (Kim 1993: 400). North Korea signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union in 1956. Its nuclear scientists and engineers were sent for training to the Dubna Combined Nuclear Institute in the Soviet Union (Kapur 1995: 3). North Korea also sent its nuclear scientists for training to China. There were reports that China also sent Wang Ganchang, its leading scientist to North Korea in 1952 to search for and collect radioactive materials (Tai 1993: 607). The North Korean government signed the second nuclear cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China in 1959 (Bermudez Jr. 1989: 594). Michael Mazarr notes that China provided some support for the North's embryonic nuclear research programme in the early 1960s (Mazarr 1995: 24-25). During the mid and late 1970s, North Korea was engaged in planning an indigenously built 30 MW (e) reactor at the Yongbyon facility (Ertman 1993: 608). Overall, there is hardly any evidence, which indicates that the North Korean nuclear programme was oriented to weaponisation during this period. The attempt of North Korea to acquire nuclear weapons could be a product of the 1980s only.

North Korea's missile programme is based primarily on Soviet Scud missile technology (IISS 2004: 64). Due to strained relations between Moscow and Pyongyang, North Korea turned to Beijing. North Korea was able to begin its own small scale missile programme with Chinese assistance in the 1960s, gradually expanding in the 1970s by modifying the Soviet Union's Scud B - short range ballistic missiles and producing a Scud-C version (Olsen 2001: 273). In 1975, North Korea imported from China a Dong Feng-61 ("East Wind") missile with a range of 600 km and a payload of one ton (IISS 2004: 64). But the project was suspended in 1978.

North Korea looked for assurance against any threat from its more powerful neighbours. The triangular shape of the Northern alliance with PRC and Soviet Union
made it possible for the DPRK to diversify the channels of support. Whatever their ideological differences with Pyongyang, the Russians regarded the DPRK as a member of the world socialist bloc and a reliable ally against the US (Macdonald 1996: 11-12).

*External balancing: Soviet Union*

North Korea was the only third world country liberated by the Soviet Red Army after World War II, and its leaders were trained and placed in power by the Soviets themselves (Chun 1993: 55). North Korea concluded a bilateral mutual assistance pact and signed a mutual defense treaty with the Soviet Union in July 1961, and stepped up its "defense construction." Soviet help permitted North Korea launch its nuclear programme in early 1960s at the Yongbyon complex, about 90 km from its capital Pyongyang. To counter the Sino-American rapprochement in 1972, the Soviet Union tried to strengthen her position in North Korea by providing additional economic and military assistance and exchanging high level delegation. Pyongyang maintained personnel and economic exchanges with Moscow. The Soviet Union gave crucial support to North Korea’s admission to the World Health Organization on 17 May 1973. In November 1973, a Soviet governmental delegation led by Vice-Premier I. T. Novikov visited North Korea to attend the joint economic and scientific technological consultative conference (Chung 1978: 148). In May 1975, a North Korean delegation led by So Chol, member of the Political Committee of the KWP Central Committee, visited the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and North Korea agreed to extend, for another five years, the agreement on mutual cooperation and defense, which expired in July 1976 (Chung 1978: 148)

As Sino-Soviet relations began to deteriorate after 1959 and intensified in the 1960s, the North Koreans avoided taking sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Any sign of Moscow’s interest in establishing informal contacts with South Korea also created apprehension in Pyongyang. Later Pyongyang slowly gravitated toward the Chinese position. North Korean-Soviet relations were not as cordial as the intimate relationships that existed between Pyongyang and Beijing during the same period.

*External balancing: China*

North Korea was closer to the theoretical construct and ideological syndrome of Chinese Communism than to the East European variety. China had provided extensive economic assistance to the North during its troubles, creating a situation of asymmetrical
interdependence. Since the Korean War, China consistently supported North Korean foreign policy against South Korea and the US. Following the PRC’s withdrawal of the Chinese People’s Volunteer troops in 1958 and with rising tensions, China agreed to DPRK’s request to formally confirm the Chinese security commitment to its ally. North Korea concluded a bilateral mutual assistance pact and signed a mutual defense treaty with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in July 1961, and stepped up its ‘defense construction.’ Article two of the Chinese-North Korean ‘Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty’ declared that ‘the two signatory nations guarantee to adopt immediately all necessary measures to oppose any country or coalition of countries that might attack either nation. Each signatory must spare no effort to supply the other with military or any other support’ (Hinton 1983: 257-258). These defense treaties, with the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, represented a triple alliance system among China, the Soviet Union and North Korea in Northeast Asia (Kang 1995: 205). The Beijing-Pyongyang treaty constitutes a more binding and unqualified commitment than the US-South Korean mutual security treaty, which conditions US intervention on consultations with Congress (Harrison 2001: 76-77).

But the Cultural Revolution and tensions over border disputes led to a major rupture in the Chinese and North Korean relations in the 1960s. North Korea’s threat perception was inspired by the deteriorating relationship with China as it was engaged in the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ in 1966. Kim was criticized by the Chinese Red Guards as a ‘fat pro-capitalist’ (Hamm 1999: 73). Friendly relations between North Korea and China were restored after the Ninth congress of the CCP in April 1969, which marked the end of the Cultural Revolution (Chung 1978: 134). Sino-North Korean contacts, which had withered since 1965, resumed after late 1969. In February 1970, a new Korean Ambassador was sent to Beijing, and a new Chinese Ambassador took up his North Korean post on 23 March 1970. In January 1970, China and North Korea concluded the Yalu and Tuman Rivers Navigation Agreement (Chung 1978: 136). The main turning point in the Sino-North Korean relations was Premier Chou En-lai’s visit to North Korea during 5-7 April 1970. His visit was the first by a top-level Chinese official since President Liu Shao-chi visited North Korea in 1963. Chou’s speech conveyed Beijing’s desire to restore friendly relations with North Korea. Recalling their ‘blood-cemented
militant friendship', Chou said: 'China and Korea are neighbours as closely related as lips and teeth, and our two peoples are intimate brothers' (Chung 1978: 136). China renewed its call for US troop withdrawal from South Korea, denounced ROK 'fascist suppression' and pledged support to the DPRK's struggle against aggression by US imperialism (Gills 1996: 123). In November 1970, Beijing dropped its claim for cession of a hundred-square-mile strip of North Korean territory around Mount Paektu (Chung 1978: 136). It initially made the demand in 1965 when North Korea drifted to the Soviet camp.

A major factor contributing to the revival of Pyongyang-Peking friendship was their shared hostility toward Japan and their increased fear of Japan's growing strength. During this period, China reminded North Korea of the US-Japanese threat and Soviet Union’s warming relations with Tokyo. During 1969 and 1970, three significant developments contributed to the revival of Pyongyang-Peking friendship (Chung 1978: 134-135). First, the Nixon doctrine announced in November 1969, which urged a positive Japanese role in the maintenance of Asian security. Second was the Nixon-Sato joint communiqué in which Premier Sato stated that 'the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area was a most important factor for the security of Japan.' and that 'the security of the Republic of Korea was essential to Japan’s own security' (as cited in Schaller 1996). The third was the extension of the US-Japan Security Treaty in June 1970. Following these developments, North Korea and China accelerated their campaign against the US-Japanese collusion.

Although Kim II Sung declared in September 1971 that the change in Sino-American relations would have ‘no direct relation to us’, the Sino-American rapprochement has had a profound effect on Korea. Realizing this, Chinese leaders made an effort to reassure North Korea. In the Shanghai communiqué issued at the end of the President Nixon’s visit to China in February 1972, Beijing declared its firm support of the DPRK’s ‘eight-point programme for the peaceful unification of Korea’ and its stand for the abolition of the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea, while the US pledged that it would ‘support efforts of the ROK to seek a relaxation of tension and increase communications in the Korean peninsula’ (Hsueh 1982: 62). Military aid from China was resumed in the 1970s. In 1971, China and North Korea signed a document agreeing to enhance material aid and economic cooperation. Most
military aid from China was free (Gilks and Segal 1985). Upon receiving additional economic and military assistance and assurances from China, Kim stressed that Sino-American rapprochement had no direct bearing on North Korea. During the 1973-1975 period, North Korea maintained close relationships with the PRC, and there were frequent exchanges of military and economic delegations between the two countries. Arms transfers from China were helpful as they totaled $360 million during 1973-77, for the first time exceeding those from the Soviet Union (Hamm 1999: 98).

North Korea's Kim Il-Sung, made a visit to Beijing from 18 April to 26 April 1975, to discuss his plan against South Korea. In his speech on 18 April, Kim Il-Sung stated,

'If war breaks out in Korea, what we lose will be the truce line and what we gain will be unification of the fatherland. If a revolution flares up in the South, we, being the same people, shall not sit by idle. Instead we will resolutely support the people of South Korea'.

These utterances provided evidence if any was needed that North Korea had completed all preparations for another war. Until the 1970s, a shared perception of the threat posed by US-South Korea alliance bound the two allies North Korea and China close. The journey to 'client state' was nearly complete. The Sino-North Korean alliance can be characterized as a case of asymmetric dependency. China became a security guarantor of regional peace in Northeast Asia by helping to deter the US-South attack against the North.

Détente with South Korea

The renewed insecurity of North Korea due to Sino-US rapprochement led to the first bilateral agreement on basic principles with South Korea. South Korea also adopted softening of its stand towards North Korea. Park Chung Hee and Kim Il Sung started to explore opportunities for a mutual accommodation. In August 1971, the two governments declared themselves ready to begin talks on the unification of the divided families (Suhrke 1973: 530). Tentative steps toward a constructing dialogue between North and South representatives began during the period of the 'ping-pong diplomacy'. At that time, talks were opened between the Red Cross Societies of North and South Korea to discuss contacts between relatives on both sides (Kiyosaki 1976: 98). The “South-North Joint Communiqué” of 4 July 1972 regulated the cooperation and reunification of Korea.
(Schmidt 2002). In this agreement, both sides committed to the peaceful reunification of Korea without the intervention of foreign powers. As a result since the 1970s, the North and South held dialogues and contacted each other. The dialogue, which materialized in August 1971, marked the beginning of a new era in North-South Korean relations, although it proved to be sterile.

To summarize, North Korea followed a policy of hostility towards America and its ally, South Korea. The hostility was due to the American support of South Korea (during the Korean War and stationing of American troops in South Korea), motivated by its sense of insecurity and ideological militancy. North Korea's animosity towards the US arose from frustrations regarding the question of Korean unification and concern over its national security. As Kim Il Sung remarked, 'The basic tasks of our revolution are to overthrow the aggressive forces of US imperialism and their lackeys and allies in the southern half and to free the people' (Sung 1971: 28). North Korea maintains that it was the US that was responsible for division of Korea. The major military threat as perceived by North Korea stems not from the South Korean armed forces but from the American forces. This is the tenor of arguments in North Korea. This is also the discourse in public domain in North Korea. The US exerted an influence on North Korea to contain the latter's threat to the security of South Korea in particular and East Asia in general.

III

DPRK's threat perception in the 1980s

In this decade the security of Korean peninsula remained the subject to the rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union, the four-power relationship of East Asia and the Pacific and the relationship between North and South Korea. As the US-Soviet détente in the 1970s turned into a global rivalry in the 1980s, the East Asian balance of power began to polarize into two blocs: the US-Japan-PRC triangle and the Soviet Union. But the different perception by the two Korean states of these changes prompted them to redirect their domestic and foreign policies. The North Korean threat perception in this period increased very dramatically. Various problems augmented the crisis. The issue to understand in this period is how this affected the perceived threat to DPRK.
Military threat from ROK-US alliance

For the North Koreans, the primary and the most imminent threat came from South Korea-US alliance. DPRK was faced with a powerful rival in the South. The South was protected by another powerful but hostile state - the US. North Korea's perception of threats from South Korea was compounded by the continuing presence of the US troops. The 'Team Spirit', the joint annual US-South Korean military exercises began in 1976 as a move to preempt and dissuade military moves against the South by North Korea also contributed to the North Korean apprehension. From Seoul's point of view, during the Cold War, the primary purpose of the military alliance between the US and South Korea was deterring North Korea from initiating war. As long as tension between the North and South lasts, the South will value the bilateral military alliance in terms of the deterrence (Kim 1995: 21).

The ROK arms buildups were achieved due to rapid economic growth in the 1980s. The data demonstrated that the South surpassed the North in the 1980s in military capital stock. The new triplets – US, Japan and the ROK military coordination added fuel to North Korea's insecurity. This triple alliance in East Asia signaled accelerated arms buildups in the US, Japan and South Korea (Hamm 1999: 83). Rapid ROK arms buildups and the introduction of the US AirLand Battle doctrine into Korea in 1983, which included deep strikes across the DMZ and counter-offensive operations including the use of tactical nuclear weapons, posed a serious threat to Pyongyang (Hamm 1999: 83). A strong US security alliance with South Korea and Japan, their efforts to enhance allied military capabilities including the redeployment of US forces in South Korea, continuing modernization of South Korean forces and development of theatre missile defenses enhanced North Korean threat perception. A US or ROK nuclear threat to its existence and increased isolation was also experienced by the DPRK in this decade. North Korea also perceived that the US controlled barriers to North Korea having normal diplomatic and economic relations with the industrialized world, the US, Western Europe and Japan (Barry 1996: 135). From the end of the Korea War until the late 1980s, the only significant contact the US had with North Korea was at the Geneva conference in 1954 (Barry 1996: 135).
Economic threat from South Korea

Although North Korea is slightly larger in area than the South Korea, its population is less than half of the South Korea's. This, coupled with its relatively smaller economic capacity made North Korea insecure. South Korean economy plunged into negative growth in 1980, the first time since 1961. But by 1983 South Korea began to recover. The South's position among the community of nations was enhanced. Many international events were organized in South Korea in the 1980s. For instance, South Korea hosted Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting in 1983, World Bank/IMF annual meeting in 1985, Asian Games in 1986 and successfully staged the Seoul Olympiad in September-October 1988.

Sino-Soviet economic policy

North Korea also felt threatened by the Chinese policy of liberalizing its economy that was termed as an 'open door policy'. The policy was formulated in 1978 and vigorously followed in the 1980s. North Korea took it as a withdrawal of Chinese commitment to Communism. New President of USSR, Gorbachev also announced the policy of 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika', which could again be perceived as a deviation from the Communism. This made North Korea skeptical about its future. In a way, their policies made North Korea more insecure and it tried to keep a 'safe distance' from both the allies. At the same time, North Korea became concerned about its self-reliance defense, which was symbolic in the idea of 'Juche' meaning autonomy and its corollary 'Jawi' meaning self-reliant defence.

By the end of 1980s, the DPRK had clearly lost the historic race with the ROK and its own allies the USSR and PRC were forging new links with Seoul in order to strengthen their own economies. These perceptions compelled North Korea to think about further strengthening its own defense. The DPRK had to find out the means by which it could preserve its national security. All these factors led North Korea to realize the significance of nuclear weapons.

Major responses

The North Korean regime worked consistently to address the sources of the security threat. The following section traces the evolution of North Korean policy towards the South and the US. The DPRK's response to the set backs in the 1980s was defensive. The response expressed itself in various forms.
In contrast to South Korea’s economic growth, the North Korean response to these increased ROK-US threats was constrained by its lagging economy. Its economy kept deteriorating in this period and came to a standstill in the 1980s. As a democratization movement intensified in South Korea, North Korea launched southward operations aimed at instigating a revolution. Its international standing had plunged after the Rangoon incident of 1983. On October 1983, in Rangoon, Burma, a bomb set off by terrorists killed much of South Korean cabinet, barely missing the South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan (Hon-ok 1998: 84). North Korea had been blamed for it. This was followed by the mid-air bombing of a Korean Air (KAL) airliner on 29 November 1987, just fifty days before the deadline for competitors to confirm the participants in the 1988 Seoul Olympics (Hon-ok 1998: 84). Until this time North Korea was facing problems at all fronts, it was politically unstable, economically ailing, and militarily weak whereas its counterpart’s performance was quite satisfactory.

To overcome these problems, North Korea’s Comprehensive Peace Initiatives of 7 November 1988 were composed of the following points (Kie 2003: 53-54):

1. Four principles for the guarantee of unification: pursuit of unification, withdrawal of US troops, reduction of armaments of both the North and South, and direct negotiations between North and South Korea.
3. Alleviation of political and military confrontation between North and South Korea.

This was a period when North Korea made an attempt to review its domestic foreign and military policy, to cope with the situation.

Internal balancing
In responding to perceived threats North Korea sought to redirect its strategies toward the South in an effort to bolster its own security. It tried to resolve various crises by demanding direct talk with the US for establishing peace on the peninsula. It also continued its arms buildup to increase the military pressure on South Korea. It led to further deterioration in the economic situation of North Korea. In the 1980s, there were constant interactions between the four powers and the two Korean states and between the two Korean states themselves. The concept of security in this decade involved not only military power but also economic and political power.
Arms buildups

The level of tension between North and South Korea made it inevitable that both sides would reconstruct their forces. The reopening of relations between the US and the PRC made Kim Il Sung serious about military buildup intentions. The overall military balance between North and South Korea as of 1981 without consideration for the US troops seemed to be in North Korea’s favour in quantity if not in quality (Kim 1982: 128). The ROK arms buildups further pressed Pyongyang to tilt to the Soviet Union. The DPRK tried hard to enhance their capability to breach the ROK air defense. For instance, it purchased some 87 Hughes/MD500 helicopters, identical with some 200 helicopters assembled and used by the South, through a West German firm (Hamm 1999: 85). After Kim Il Sung visited Moscow in 1984 for the first time in 23 years, Moscow provided more than $2 billion in military aid to modernize the Korean People’s Army (KPA) air defense capabilities. In addition to MIG-23 and SU-25 aircraft and SA-3 and SA-5 SAMs during the mid-1980s, Moscow provided the North with the latest generation of Soviet fighters, the MIG-29 (Hamm 1999: 85). According to Military Balance 1989-90, the total number of North Korean troops was 1,040,000, those of South Korea number 6,50,000. North Korea had 3,200 tanks, South Korea had 1,560.

The following table compares the military personnel strengths of North Korea and South Korea over the past 26 years. South Korea’s military strength was about half that of North Korea at the start of the Korean War. But after that, until the late 1970s, military forces in the South included more personnel than in the North. In 1978-79, the estimated size of North Korean forces increased from 120,000 to 160,000, while South Korean forces declined in number. In that year North Korean forces became larger for the first time since the armistice. Reassessments in 1989 increased the total from 26 to 31 active infantry divisions and 25 reserve infantry divisions (Thomas 1991: 283).
Table 4.2
A Comparison of North Korea and South Korea Estimated Military Personnel, Subsequent Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>North Korea</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>310,000</td>
<td>627,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>413,000</td>
<td>645,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>512,000</td>
<td>642,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>632,000-672,000</td>
<td>619,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>678,000</td>
<td>600,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1,040,000</td>
<td>650,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Nuclear weapons**

North Korea attempted to get greater world attention in the 1980s and nuclear programme could be a very effective means to achieve this objective. North Korean nuclear policy is supported and linked with its policy of survival. During the first phase of North Korea’s nuclear efforts, 1959-80, its nuclear programme was focused on basic training and research. Around 1980, Pyongyang initiated to build industrial scale nuclear facilities that could produce substantial amounts of nuclear energy and weapons grade plutonium (IISS 2004: 27). During the 1980s, whenever the US or South Korea raised the nuclear issue, North Korea cited a need to remove US nuclear weapons from South Korea.

The first sign that North Korea had an indigenous nuclear programme came in March 1984, when US satellite identified an apparent nuclear reactor vessel under construction at Yongbyon (Oberdorfer 1997: 250). By itself, the design of this reactor was not a proof that the North intended to start on a nuclear weapons programme. However from March 1986 photographs began to show the construction of a building typical of reprocessing plant for separating plutonium (Oberdorfer 1997: 250). Because North Korea was not signing the safeguard agreements, the credibility of North Korea was seriously doubted. In May 1989, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) claimed that it had evidence that North Korea had built a plutonium reprocessing facility at Yongbyon for converting nuclear waste into weapons grade material (Rubinstein 1994).
In the late 1980s, speculation about a North Korean plutonium processing facility began to come into the picture. A top KGB secret document of 22 February 1990, revealed in March 1992, suggested that North Korea had actually completed a bomb (Mack 1991: 89).

*Arms control proposals*

Under threatening circumstances due to US-ROK alliance, North Korea made arms control proposals since the early 1960s. Most of these proposals emphasized the need for the withdrawal of the American forces stationed in South Korea. In July 1987, North Korea advanced a 'Phased Arms Reduction Proposal' which included the reduction of each side’s armed forces to 100,000 troops, together with a phased withdrawal of the American forces in South Korea. In November 1988, North Korea proposed a 'plan for comprehensive peace' in the Korean Peninsula, which included the reduction of each side's armed forces to 100,000 troops, and three party talks between the US, North Korea and South Korea. The phase of détente in East Asia (1988-1992) is characterized by improvement in relations between the four major powers involved in the region.

*Inter-Korean rapprochement*

The North Korea made an effort to broaden international relationship driven by economic priorities although political and strategic considerations were important. In this decade, both sides, North and South Korea held talks and made some perceptible progress on economic cooperation and commodity exchange. They set up a 'North-South Economic Cooperation Committee.' They reached agreements on the reunion of separated families, exchange of mails, visits, etc. The positive movements between North and South continued up to January 1989, and then there was a sudden halt in the peace process. The problem remained the same as before in that two incompatible political systems confront each other across a truce line. They had not been able to reduce their level of hostilities. As it was in the period of the Cold War, dialogues and exchanges were not continuous. Throughout the 1980s, North Korea sought to engage the US in substantive dialogue, with a compromise on earlier DPRK demands, for instance, that US troops be removed from Korean soil as a precondition for talks.
**External balancing: China**

Maintaining a close relationship with Pyongyang remained one of the cornerstones of China's policy toward the Korean peninsula in the decade of 1980s. For Beijing, the ROK was the 'fascist' axis of the triangle of American imperialism and Japanese militarism. South Korea's normalization with Japan in 1965, its engagement in the Indo-China conflict, and its support of the 'Nixon-Sato joint communiqués', Korean and Taiwan clauses fueled the view of Seoul as a forward base for US sponsored Chinese containment. Moreover, the breakup of the Sino-Soviet block from the early 1960s only reinforced Beijing's hostility towards Seoul. For China, loyalty with North Korea became important not only for Cold War reasons but also for strategic ones vis-à-vis the new Soviet threat. Aside from the ideological benefits of North Korean alignment against the Soviets, China's concerns centered on the threat of Soviet access to warm water ports in North Korean area like Najin and Nampo. In combination with Soviet access to Cam Ranh Bay, this could threaten China's northeastern region and the Bohai Sea. China's difficult relations with Vietnam, Cuba, Mangolia and Albania only increased the strategic value of North to China.

In the 1980s China needed a stable international and domestic environment. The rising tensions in the region presented both a threat and an opportunity to China. It was in China's political and security interests to maintain friendly relations with North Korea. China decided that it needed to play a more active role to avoid the risk of instability. It wanted to avoid a situation in which North Korea's regime could collapse under US. At the same time, it may have seen an opportunity to improve its relations with the US. China sought to find a formula for multilateral talks, while continuing to protect Pyongyang from international pressure.

During the 1980s China pushed economic reform and a policy of opening to the outside world. Also, it began to readjust its external relations by asserting that its policy toward the Korean peninsula, had undergone a significant change. Beijing's new policy toward North Korea centred on maintaining peace and stability in the region. To do this, China adopted a dual approach- on the one hand strengthened its traditional ties with Pyongyang, and on the other, promoted its relation with Seoul. China's economic relations with the peninsula were centred on the North until the early 1980s. They were
characterized by a huge economic aid programme for Pyongyang's benefit. As the Moscow-Pyongyang relationship faded, China continued to rank as a leading economic partner of North Korea. In its pursuit of economic opening and reforms in the 1980s, the importance of ideology in China has been declining. The bilateral trade volume between China and DPRK declined from $562 million in 1989 to $483 million in 1990 (Hao and Qubing 1992: 1143). Yet the effect of ideology on Chinese policy toward the Korean peninsula is far from disappearing. For instance, when pressed by North Korea on the surging trade relationship between China and South Korea in 1980-81, Beijing issued strict official regulations that caused the trade to decline significantly in 1982-83. In 1986, yielding to North Korea's protest again, Beijing suspended for almost a year the construction of the first Sino-South Korean joint venture - the Fuzhou Refrigerator company between Fujian Province and the Daewoo Group (Hao and Qubing 1992: 1144).

North Korea's Prime Minister Li Chong-ok paid an official visit to Beijing in January 1981. The Chinese leadership had often reiterated their support for Kim Il-Sung's demand for US withdrawal and establishment of the 'Democratic Confederate Republic of Korea' (Kim 1982: 110). Beijing also insisted that the US get in contact with North Korea. In January 1984, Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang, in an effort to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula, officially assumed the role of an intermediary between North Korea on the one hand and US and South Korea on the other (Lee 1985: 173). The North Korean leadership, through the intermediary of China, proposed 3-party talks among South and North Korea and the United States. It was an attempt to normalize relations with the US. Although the tripartite talks proposed by North Korea - a proposal conveyed to the US by the Chinese Premier - were unacceptable to the Americans and South Koreans, Premier Zhao's action did indicate the direction of China's Korea policy (Lee 1985: 173). Beginning in October 1985, the US in turn eased its hard line attitude towards North Korea.

As an important weapons supplier for Pyongyang until the early 1980s, China took a more cautious track in its military cooperation with North Korea. It made clear that it advocated a nuclear free zone on the peninsula and supported efforts to resolve the issue through consultation with all concerned parties. Twelve meetings between the political counselor of the American embassy in Beijing and his North Korean counterpart were
held between December 1988 and October 1990 (Harrison 1991: 317). China was urging the US to accept a compromise formula on arms control negotiations. Formal negotiations on mutual force reduction and a peace treaty, according to the Bush administration, should be preceded by informal negotiations on confidence building measures to defuse tensions along the 38th parallel (Harrison 1991: 317). By 1988, the North Koreans began developing a modified version of the Scud-B at its missile production facility near Pyongyang. There was not much information about this improved version of the Scud-B. North Korea was reported to have acquired necessary technology through alleged covert operations. The guidance system was provided by the People’s Republic of China (Kapur 1995: 15). The missile was successfully test fired in October 1991. On 5 November 1989, North Korean Chairman Kim Il Sung visited China and confirmed their traditional friendship (Takesada 1990: 181).

Since the latter half of 1989, both PRC and DPRK have been emphasizing the superiority of the party and importance of ideology. At the end of the 1980s, the two most powerful countries i.e., the USSR and China directly bordering North Korea were developing better relations with their erstwhile enemies namely the US, South Korea and Japan. The changes after 1989 regarding Soviet Union and East European countries had served to bring Sino-North Korean political and ideological ties together. However the changing environment had been filled with frightening developments for North Korea. The nature of alliance between North Korea and China underwent a critical change to the extent that alliance existed but became more flexible. In the 1990s, the DPRK entered an entirely different phase.

_DPRK’s threat perception in the 1990s_

A noted observer of the Korean situation remarked that the ‘Korean peninsula is a Cold war island in a post-Cold War sea’ (Cumings 1988: 102). In an interview on 4 October 1991, the director of the General Staff Committee of the defence ministry of North Korea, General Kim Yong Chol told, “If US analysts think that North Korea is some African or West Asiaern country, then it is a very big miscalculation” (Hayes 1992: 123).
The end of the Cold War in Europe, the aftermath of the Gulf War, and the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union – all of which took place in 1989-1991 were bound to have a profound impact on the East Asian region. During the Cold War the two ideologically opposed blocs led by the US and the Soviet Union maintained hostility against each other. With the end of the ideological rivalry, states often cooperated with enemies and opposed allies, according to their national interests. For example, South Korea, a traditional ally of the US, established diplomatic relations with its Cold War opponents - the Soviet Union and China. North Korea is also seeking diplomatic normalization with the US and Japan. In the post-Cold War era characterized by economic competition, countries are paying growing attention to economic interests. At the beginning of 1990s, the polarization of international relations was replaced by balance of forces based partly on military power and partly on economic potential. In some aspects, the legacies of the Cold War era are being kept intact, coupled with some new variations.

The years 1990-1991 were very momentous for the Korean peninsula. A sudden meeting was held in San Francisco in June 1990 between South Korean President Roh Tae Woo and the Soviet President Gorbachev. It was in September 1990 that the first Prime Ministerial level dialogue between North Korea and South Korea occurred. Japan suddenly began to open up a dialogue with North Korea, and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with South Korea at the end of September 1990. The US unilaterally withdrew about 4000 troops from South Korea as a part of President Bush's plan to reduce American forces in South Korea. In 1991, an important American decision was made. The US decided to remove all land-based and later air-based tactical nuclear weapons from overseas bases. By the end of the year, President Roh Tae Woo declared there were no nuclear weapons in South Korea. On the other side, 1991 was also the year of the Soviet decision to end the sale of oil and other goods to North Korea at ‘friendship prices.’ This decision had a very damaging impact on the North Korean economy. Finally, 1991 ended with two historic agreements between North and South Korea, one on non-aggression and the other on denuclearisation.
**End of the Cold War**

With the collapse of the Cold War era, the security environment in East Asia changed. The DPRK’s orientation towards the rest of the world became worse. In North Korea’s perceptions, the passing of the Cold War had not diluted existing tensions, instead facilitated the emergence of new competitors. It believed that the US having brought down socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was also determined to overthrow its own government, in collusion with South Korea. The demise of socialism and normalization of the relationship between North Korea’s allies and its adversary - Russia and China with South Korea without ‘cross-recognition’ of the DPRK by the US or Japan had been widely viewed as a danger to its security.

After two decades of opposing two Koreas, North Korea capitulated on the UN membership issue and both Korean governments were admitted into the UN in the autumn of 1991 (Gills 1996: 232). Diplomatically, South Korea with its successful Nord politik, earned recognition from North Korea’s allies. When Moscow informed Pyongyang of its decision to establish diplomatic ties with Seoul, then-Foreign Minister Kim Young Nam warned that North Korea had no choice but to facilitate the development of necessary weapons (Park 2000: 535). North Korea perceived a grave danger to its security and survival. Moscow started talking with South Korea, which ultimately resulted in establishing diplomatic relations with Seoul on 30 September 1990. Gradually, South Korea established diplomatic relations with other Communist countries also, like, Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria etc. The substantial reforms and changes within the Soviet Union, China and other East European Communist countries strengthened the initiative of South Korea. It is said that South Korea’s northwards initiative could not have been as successful, had it not been supported by reciprocal

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change in the Soviet and Chinese perception of South Korea. Improving relations between South Korea and the Socialist countries in general and the Soviet Union and China in particular, made North Korea suspicious about the intentions of South Korea. North Korea reacted very sharply on this matter. It realized that it couldn’t rely on the certainty of gaining foreign support because it was quite evident that even socialist countries were more concerned about their own interest and they cannot jeopardize it for the sake of North Korea. North Korean faith in other multilateral organizations and regimes also got eroded given their tilt towards South Korea.

Changing military balance
The strained relationship between North and South had not been relaxed more than fifty years since the Korean War ended. The two Koreas still followed hostile policies towards each other on foreign affairs, military and politics. In fact, the continued military confrontation between two Koreas in the post-Cold War period had caused great concern in the world. The ROK regained its military superiority, which it enjoyed during the postwar period up to the mid-1960s but lost in the 1970s and 1980s.

Since the beginning of the 1990s North Korea had withdrawn from the joint cease-fire commission (Schmidt 2002). Only the military committee still meets. North Korea tried to put political pressure on the US to reach a peace agreement. Since the DPRK linked a peace treaty settlement with the withdrawal of all US troops from South Korea, the US and South Korea had rejected such an agreement. On 27 September 1991 President Bush announced that the US had decided to withdraw all the nuclear weapons it had deployed in South Korea (IISS 2004: 7). In December that year South Korea declared that all the nuclear weapons deployed in that country had been withdrawn. (IISS 2004: 7). The US cancelled the major annual military exercise “Team Spirit” for 1992 that addressed the DPRK security concerns (IISS 2004: 7). After eight rounds of inter-Prime Ministerial talks in December 1991, the two Koreas committed themselves to make the Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons and signed the historical Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Exchanges and Cooperation. On 31 December 1991, North and South Korea signed ‘The Joint Declaration for Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula’ in which both sides pledged they would ‘not test, manufacture, produce or receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons’ (Mack 1996: 55). But this agreement was never implemented due to disagreements between Seoul and Pyongyang.
Deployment of soldiers along the demilitarized zone (DMZ), state of confrontation precipitated by the Cold War, continued in the post-Cold War era. North Korea signed the IAEA agreement on 30 January 1992 (IISS 2004: 7). Towards the end of 1992, tensions increased between the IAEA and DPRK. The agency sought access to the suspected waste sites, and North Korea responded that these sites were beyond the IAEA's jurisdiction (IISS 2004: 8). The DPRK refused to place its own nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards as it was quite concerned about its own security. This was also done in view of the continued US-South Korean military alliance and the existence of the US nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula.

In October 1992, the US and South Korea announced that they would continue preparations for the 1993 ‘Team Spirit’ exercise in the absence of progress on the bilateral inspection regime (IISS 2004: 8). When consultations with North Korea failed regarding inspection, the US displayed satellite images showing the suspect nuclear waste sites to the IAEA Board of Governors Resolution. Russia and China also joined the US in adopting the Board’s resolution on 25 February 1993. (IISS 2004: 8). The Team Spirit exercise also began in February. The very nature of these exercises was a public threat to North Korea. On 12 March 1993, North Korea announced that it intended to withdraw from the NPT. It reiterated that it was being forced to withdraw because of US military threats as well as efforts to manipulate the IAEA to gain access to military sites (IISS 2004: 8). It also suggested that it would reconsider withdrawal if the US stopped its nuclear threats against their country and IAEA returned to the principle of impartiality. China and Russia made it clear that they would not support tougher measures against the DPRK unless the US first tried to resolve through dialogue. The Chinese expressed criticism of the US resolve to hold IAEA ‘special inspections’ in North Korea saying, ‘you cannot force a country to allow inspectors in’ (Kapur 1995: 111). Iraq and North Korea were not the same according to the Chinese official.

Threats and counter threats were being exchanged between North Korea on the one side and the US, Japan and South Korea on the other side. Washington’s uncompromising position on keeping its troops in South Korea further bolstered North Korea’s perceived threat. A comparison of joint ROK and US troops with North Korean forces gives the following picture.
Table 4.3
Comparison of Conventional Weapons between North Korea, South Korea and the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Tanks</th>
<th>Armoured Combat Vehicles</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Combat Aircraft</th>
<th>Combat Helicopters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>1,046,000</td>
<td>3,500-3,800</td>
<td>2,300-2,500</td>
<td>11,500-12,500</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>24+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROK</td>
<td>623,000-647,000</td>
<td>2,360-2,390</td>
<td>2,400-2,543</td>
<td>5,230-5,425</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Forces Korea</td>
<td>36,200</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A quantitative comparison shows that North Korea is superior only in number of soldiers (+360,000), tanks (+1300) and primarily artillery (+7000), and in the other arms categories (armoured combat vehicle, combat helicopters, combat aircraft) the South Korean and American forces together are superior in number. The deployment of approximately one million North Korean, over half a million South Korean and 34,000 American soldiers on active duty on the small peninsula represent almost largest concentration of military strength on earth.

In South Korea, the US planned to retain a ground and air presence to deter aggression from North Korea. It also pledged to continue to assist South Korea's military in force improvement (Oh 1995: 84). The US, South Korea and Japan reached an agreement stemming from the 1994 Geneva Nuclear Framework Agreements to regulate nuclear reactor plutonium waste disposal and replace old-style reactors with light water reactors (Coleman 1997: 239). In an effort to exhibit its power over North Korea, the US sometimes threatened the use of force, as it did at the height of the nuclear crisis in 1994 (Park 2000: 535). President Clinton, during his visit to South Korea, warned North Koreans that if they ever develop and use nuclear weapons, 'it would be the end of their country' (Hamm 1999: 88). When the US approved the dispatch of substantial military reinforcements to South Korea in the summer of 1994, it was believed that the Korean
peninsula was at the brink of another major armed conflict. In June 1994, the Clinton administration was about to decide an additional force deployment option in Korea. North Korean responded, ‘Seoul is not far from here (Panmunjom, located in the DMZ)’, if things go wrong, ‘Seoul would become a sea of fire’ (Hamm 1999: 89). When the situation did not warrant the use of force, the US adopted the strategy of engagement. This strategy of conflict avoidance resulted in the bilateral Agreed Framework of 1994, which led to the formation of a multilateral organization to implement the agreement, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) (Park 2000: 535). In line with this policy, the South Korean President, Kim Dae Jung, adopted the reconciliatory “sunshine policy” towards North Korea based on the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation in an effort to help the North join the international community (Kim 1999: 64). China and Japan also followed suit by participating in such multilateral efforts. With regard to the joint South Korea-US military training exercise on 12 October 1996, North Korea said in a veiled threat, ‘It is our holy duty to retaliate mercilessly against those who try to set fire to us, we will always remember the crime committed by the South and will exact a thousand fold price for every sin it has perpetrated’ (Yu 1999: 17-18).

**South Korean economic miracle**

North Korea’s concern of being isolated was accelerated by the South’s economic growth, democratization, and the aggressive Nordpolitic under President Roh Tae-woo. An examination of the North Korean contemporary economic and military scene also suggests that North Korean apprehension was not fully unjustified. Five decades after the division, it became clear that Pyongyang had lost the race to Seoul. Seoul moved ahead in the diplomatic contest, having gained recognition from 118 countries to 101 for Pyongyang (Lho 1991: 342). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the economic development of North Korea was not encouraging. From 1990 on, North’s economy was estimated to have had a continuous ‘negative growth’ for seven years. The lack of foreign exchange in North Korea made it impossible to purchase weapons and equipment from countries and difficult to supply appropriate food and energy for its soldiers (Kim 1999: 49). The North had neither internal resources nor foreign aid for its economic recovery and arms buildups to compensate the ended alliance relationship with the Soviet Union. Few scholars link the crises of economic stagnation with the nuclear weaponisation.
others think that it was a well thought out plan of North Korea to counter the threats to its national security, which was not possible by conventional arms buildup due to scarcity of resources (Ko and Bon-Hak 1993: 114-115). To make matters worse in concrete economic terms, the two former socialist allies of North Korea - USSR and China cut their already shrinking aid and demanded hard currency payments in bilateral trade. Its impact on the military expenditure of North Korea is shown in table 4.3.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>5,919</td>
<td>2,273</td>
<td>2,005</td>
<td>-66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>8,962</td>
<td>15,334</td>
<td>12,940</td>
<td>+44.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


South Korea, in this period continued emphasizing on the export led growth and other strategies of the Park era with added emphasis on liberalization and deregulation. It gave a tremendous leap to the South Korean economy and contrary to North Korea, it showed impressive growth in the later half of the 1980s and early 1990s. South Korean economic performance also enhanced its status in the community of nations. A credible democratic process and the Nord Politik which began from the election of Roh Tae Woo as the President of South Korea also had its bearing on improving the international stature of South Korea. Whereas South Korea had been getting recognition by the international community, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and collapse of socialism in many East European countries accentuated the threat perception of North Korea. Now these countries could not be a source of generous aid for North Korean economy resurgence.

These were the reasons for which North Korea felt more threatened. To summarise, the North Koreans demanded that the US withdraw its nuclear weapons from South Korea, stop nuclear war exercises directed against North Korea, allow IAEA inspections to nuclear facilities in South Korea, and give "legally binding" assurances not to use nuclear weapons against North Korea. Any attempt to dismantle North Korean nuclear capability was suspected by Pyongyang and perceived as another threat for the
independence in foreign relations “Cha Ju Sozg”. North Korea also apprehended that these kinds of attempts and their success could give legitimacy to the South Korean path of development and in the process would lead to a weakening and eventual dismantling of North Korean system itself. The October 2000 visit to Washington of first Vice Marshall Jo Myong Rok, as Kim Jong Il’s special envoy, resulted in US-DPRK Joint Communiqué. The communiqué stated ‘that neither government would have hostile intent towards the other and confirmed the commitment of both governments to make every effort to build a new relationship free from past enmity.’ Pyongyang was hostage to the fear of abandonment by its allies and to the fear of losing the strategic contest with Seoul.

**Major responses by North Korea**

In a bid to compensate for diplomatic setbacks, North Korea made diplomatic efforts towards the remaining socialist countries. On 8 April 1992, it adopted the ‘North Korean Declaration’ to strengthen the solidarity of socialist political parties in the world (Kim 1999: 79). But this manoeuvre reaped little due to the declining influence of the socialist forces in the global community. North Korea made efforts to restore its bilateral relations with China, while currying favours with its erstwhile ally, Russia. In order to pull itself out of diplomatic isolation, North Korea sought to improve relations with the US and Japan in order to obtain economic aids. Following the end of the Cold War, North Korea eased its hostile stance against South Korea to some extent. It joined the inter-Korean Red Cross talks and made sports exchanges with the South. The changed North-South relations were highlighted by the conclusion of the Basic Agreement in December 1991 (Kim 1999: 84).

North Korea was also seeking better relations with non-aligned countries. It responded with increased diplomatic efforts towards non-aligned nations. Foreign minister Kim Yong-nam, attended a foreign ministers meeting of non-aligned countries held in Columbia in May 1998, where he appealed for the enhanced solidarity of the non-aligned movement (Kim 1999: 80). North Korea maintained cooperative relations with Iran. Together with China, Iran supplied most of the DPRK’s oil. Thus Pyongyang tried to take protective measures against possible external threats.
Internal balancing

Military expenditure

North Korea’s security policy was faced with challenges in this decade of 1990. Due to the economic decline of the 1990s, the government was not in a position to invest for modernization of the armed forces and the purchase of the new weapons. North Korea could not keep pace with arms development in terms of quality. In 1995, the DPRK military capabilities were estimated to be 32-56 per cent of the ROK and in 1997 estimated as 30-50 per cent of the ROK (Hamm 1999: 113, 115). The economic poverty compelled North Korean forces to reduce their exercise operations. North Korea’s 1999 New Year Joint editorial called for making the year a ‘turning point in building a powerful nation’, emphasizing both a militarily and economically powerful socialist state (Park 2001: 91). This indicates that its survival under security threats and economic difficulties was given first priority.

Military programmes

The North Korean military concluded the highest level of military exercises in September 2000, since the late 1980s. This was done to reassure North Korea’s security policy towards South Korea, given the strong alliance that South Korea and the US shared. North Korea seemed to have had only two ways to respond to the trend, either increase its manpower, or to go for nuclear weaponization. In March 1999, Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Grigori Karasin visited Pyongyang and initialed the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation (Meyer 2006: 205). In contrast to 1961 treaty this new treaty did not include in Russian security guarantee to North Korea. It committed Moscow and Pyongyang only to contact each other in the event of a crisis. A meeting took place in Pyongyang in July 2000. Russian head of state, Putin and Kim Jung Il signed the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation (Meyer 2006: 206). The obligation to give mutual assistance was played down and emphasis was placed on the aspect of mutual cooperation. Since this Russia no longer regarded itself either as the provider or as security to North Korea.
Table 4.5
North Korea’s Military Buildup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total troops</td>
<td>8,40,000</td>
<td>1,110,000</td>
<td>1,160,000</td>
<td>1,055,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army troops</td>
<td>7,50,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1,003,000</td>
<td>923,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>3,275</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>3,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armored Vehicles</td>
<td>1,690</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-aircraft artillery</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>7,800</td>
<td>13,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighter bombers</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warships</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missiles</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submarines</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>90+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Military Balance, IISS, London (Published for the year listed).

As indicated in table, North Korea has bolstered its military capability from 1986 to 1991. The effort of North Korea was to check its threat perception, which had dramatically increased in this period due to changing equations in the region. Although North Korea tried to show itself committed to the concept of a nuclear weapon free Korean peninsula, yet it did not take appropriate measures to restrain its own nuclear weapon development programme. It seems that probably North Korea had been trying to keep its option open for dealing with any eventuality and did not want to surrender its nuclear programme for its own proposal of nuclear weapon free Korean peninsula.

The Korean nuclear problematic
North Korea’s interest in developing nuclear and missile capability are directly linked to its own search for power and survival. It stems from its continuing efforts to establish and maintain military forces against South Korea, Japan and US forces in the region. North Korea has been excessively concerned with the American military threat. In its perception, the possession of nuclear weapons offered an effective defense against possible South Korean political coercion and an effective deterrence against possible American nuclear blackmail. For DPRK, nuclear and missile issues could contribute to building a militarily powerful state. It makes clear that for the DPRK, nuclear and missile programme is part of its right to self-defense. The nuclear issue has also given the North
political leverage in its dealings with the US and South Korea. By using this leverage, DPRK has gained political concessions, security guarantees, and a $4.5 billion energy aid programme as part of its October 1994 “Agreed Framework” deal with the US (Mack 1996: 24).

Nuclear programme: *Korean Central News Agency* on 20 November 1991 cites a foreign ministry spokesman saying, ‘if the US truly intends to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, there will arise no problem provided that it withdraws its nuclear weapons from South Korea, removes the nuclear threat to us.’ From 1987 to 1991, North Korea was believed to be involved in preparations to build nuclear weapons. When the speculations about North Korean nuclear programme were mounting, North Korea proposed for denuclearising the peninsula. On 31 May 1990, it promulgated an “Arms Control Proposal for the Peace of the Korean Peninsula”. It included a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) on the Korean peninsula, the immediate withdrawal of nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea, the prohibition of the production and acquisition of nuclear weapons and banning the transit and passage of aircraft and vessels carrying nuclear weapons through or over the territory of North and South Korea (Koo and Bon-Haq 1998: 131). The North Korean proposal intended to make the US withdraw its tactical nuclear weapons stationed in South Korean territory. This proposal could not be acceptable to South Korea and so it was rejected straight away.

The DPRK was not ready to sign the safeguard agreements with the IAEA, which was necessary to sign within the 18 months of signing the NPT. The DPRK Ambassador to India, Cha Bong Ju said on 6 April 1992, that if his country did develop nuclear weapons, they would be for delivery against Japan, not the US or the ROK. On June 10, 1992, the IAEA voted to suspend technical assistance to the DPRK, and passed a resolution condemning North Korea for her non-compliance. The US enlisted the support of the major powers in the region for economic sanctions. But Japan, the PRC, Russia and the ROK were unreceptive of the plan. Pyongyang threatened destruction in Japan and the ROK if these were implemented. Washington reformulated a scheme for mild sanctions. The PRC remained opposed to any sanctions, economic or political driving Pyongyang to isolation. In September 1992, there was evidence that North Korea was attempting to conceal the extent of its previous production of nuclear weapon grade plutonium undercut the process of reconciliation.
In February 1993, the DPRK's refusal to grant IAEA inspectors access to certain nuclear installations triggered a confrontation with the IAEA. The DPRK announced her withdrawal from the NPT on 12 March 1993, to come into effect in June (IISS 2004: 8). China and Russia had their own role to play to negotiate North Korea not to withdraw from the treaty. North Korea advanced two arguments for its decision to withdraw from NPT. The first was IAEA insistence on 'special inspections' of its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon nuclear complex and the second was the resumption of 'Team Spirit.' Although the IAEA referred the DPRK's non-compliance to the UN Security Council, the latter in view of the PRC’s opposition to any resolution condemning Pyongyang took no action. On 10 April 1993, North Korea responded to the UN Security Council President's statement saying that, 'if the nuclear suspicion against the DPRK poses a threat to world peace and security, the nuclear weapons which actually exist in other nations must be a threat hundred times more grave. If the UN Security Council wants to deal with the nuclear issue from the stand of guaranteeing world peace and security it must call into question, first of all, the US which was the first country in the world to develop nuclear weapons and has the largest arsenal of such weapons' (Kapur 1995: 116).

In May 1993, the Security Council passed a resolution calling on the DPRK regime to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the NPT. Pyongyang's response was to insist that bilateral talks between itself and Washington provided the means to a solution. Washington held two sets of talks with Pyongyang, in June and July 1993. In the first talk, Pyongyang agreed to suspend her withdrawal from the NPT, and Washington pledged to refrain from threats and use of force and an agreement was reached on the impartial implementation of safeguards in the nuclear inspections (Kirby 1996). Prior to the second round of talks, Clinton had warned the North Korean leadership of dire consequences if it used nuclear weapons: its country would be destroyed. Clinton commented on 9 November that North Korea would not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons and that any military attack on the ROK would be considered an attack on the US. In its response China argued that the US had no right to demand an inspection based only on suspicions: 'No country in the international community is entitled, or authorized, to have such a right.' It was the Chinese opposition (as a permanent member it had a veto) to any harsh resolution that the Security Council came
out with a mild resolution. The US, South Korea and Japan could not adopt an aggressive posture against North Korea primarily because China was opposed to any such move.

By June 1994, the crisis had escalated to one of virtual war that would have involved the US and China. In 1994, both sides agreed to hold a summit. However the summit did not take place. On 21 October 1994, the U.S. and the DPRK initialed an agreement on North Korea’s nuclear programme (Satterwhite 1996). They signed an Agreed Framework in Geneva to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. Both issues, special inspection and North-South relations were not resolved. Throughout the negotiations, China and Russia said they had little influence over Pyongyang and urged the US to resolve the dispute through bilateral negotiations with North Korea. After the Agreed Framework was concluded, Chinese officials claimed that they had helped to pressure North Korea into an agreement by warning them not to count on Chinese protection if the negotiations collapsed and the US sought UNSC sanctions (IISS 2004: 10-11).

Tension on the Korean peninsula decreased only when the US adopted a ‘give and take’ diplomatic style in recognition that Pyongyang’s recalcitrance can be read as a bargaining tactic to get something in return for giving up the nuclear option (Sigal 1998: 21). Thus, the first nuclear crisis was solved in 1994. North Korea followed a policy of excluding South Korea from negotiations concerning arms control and security issues eversince the signing of the Agreed Framework. Pyongyang saw the US in the forefront on the nuclear issue, leader of the US-ROK-Japan core of a global coalition, and the largest prospective threat to Pyongyang. In May 1999 the US team visited the Kumchang-ri site in order to determine whether it was a secret nuclear facility.

Missile proliferation: The North Korean missile programme has expanded from 1960s and 1970s developing and deploying tactical artillery rockets, to developing and deploying short-range ballistic missiles in the 1980s and, in the 1990s developing and deploying medium-range ballistic missiles.

In a formal proposal on 16 June 1998, North Korea offered to negotiate a missile agreement if the US would agree to link it with a formal end to the Korean War. The then US Defense Secretary William Perry acknowledged that it were security concerns that led North Korea to pursue its nuclear and missile capabilities. On 17 September 1999, Perry declared,
'While North Korea have many reasons for wanting this missile programme, their primary reason is security and deterrence. They would be deterring the U.S. We do not think of ourselves as a threat to North Korea, but I fully believe that they consider U.S. a threat to them’ (as cited in Harrison 2001: 70).

In August 1998, North Korea tested its newer Taepodong missile, with an extended range, over the Japanese archipelago (Sato 2006: 82). In response to the Taepo-dong launch, US warned that additional missile tests would jeopardize its support for the ‘Agreed Framework’ and humanitarian food shipments. In September 1999, DPRK agreed to a moratorium on additional long-range missile tests. On 17 September 1999, President Clinton partially lifted sanctions against North Korea (Kim 1999: 64). From Pyongyang’s perspective, the US NMD (National Missile Defense)/TMD (Theatre Missile Defense) plans were preprogrammed to avoid direct confrontation with Beijing and Moscow, hiding behind the excuse of North Korea as a rouge state but also reinforcing Japan’s military role in East Asia, as preparations for another war in Asia. (Kim and Lee 2002: 123). However North Korea’s acceptance of the moratorium may have been encouraged by pressure from China. According to US officials, the Chinese played a positive role in international efforts to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons programme (Mack 1996: 5). North Korea has NoDong I missile of 1000 km range more than the range needed to reach any place in South Korea from any location in the North. North Korea’s launch of a new rocket missile (Taepodong I), the discovery of its suspected underground nuclear facilities in Kumchangri and its alleged intention to test fire a new long range missile caused tension in the area. South Korea began to pressure the US for an agreement to increase the range of its military missiles from 180 km to 500 km.

Since the mid 1970s, North Korea has pursued the development of ballistic missiles with increasing range, which it has deployed with its armed forces. By the mid 1980s, North Korea had deployed short-range Hwasong-5/-6 missiles capable of reaching targets throughout South Korea. By the mid 1990s, it had deployed No-dong missiles capable of reaching all of Japan. Although the primary motivation for North Korea’s missile programme appears to be related to security concerns, the export of missiles and missile technology to West Asia and South Asian countries for money has also become an important consideration.
Arms export policy
North Korea started exporting ballistic missiles and related equipments materials and technology. It has sold Hwasong-5/-6 or No-dong missiles, as well as materials, equipment, components and production technology mainly to countries in the West Asia, such as Egypt, Iran, Libya, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Since the days of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran had bought North Korean weapons in substantial quantities. Since 1990 the two nations also pursued joint ballistic missile development. During the late 1990s, North Korea appeared to have sold Iran missile components, equipments and materials useful to the development of its Shahab III and Shahab IV missiles, although not complete missile production technology, or major subsystems (Cirincione 2002: 263). This export business earned a significant portion of North Korea's hard currency. It accounted for some 30 percent of its $ 20.4 billion worth of total exports from 1980 to 1993, according to South Korean sources (Eul-chul 1999: 6).

Nuclear-missile links between Pakistan and North Korea are traced back to the early 1990s when Pakistan having acquired the capability to build enriched uranium devices, was seeking appropriate delivery systems. In 1989 Pakistan negotiated the sale of 12-25 liquid fuelled No-dong ballistic missiles from North Korea (IISS 2002: 1). In 1992, Pakistani officials visited North Korea to view a No-dong prototype, and in May 1993, Pakistani engineers and scientists attended the No-dong test-launch at Masudan-ri (IISS 2002: 1). In late 1995, Marshal Ch'oe Gwang, the former vice-chairman of North Korea's National Defence Commission, visited Pakistan and brokered a missile deal (IISS 2002: 1). In 1996, Taiwanese officials seized 15-tons of ammonium perchlorate on a freighter bound from North Korea to Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Committee (IISS 2002: 1). In 1997, Kang T'ae Yun, a North Korean diplomat based in Pakistan, arranged for the supply of maraging steel from the All Russian Institute of Light Alloys in Moscow to both North Korea and Pakistan (IISS 2002: 1).

In late-1997, foreign intelligence agencies began monitoring the increased frequency of cargo flights between North Korea and Pakistan (IISS 2002: 1). North Korean telemetry crews traveled on some of these flights. Missile cooperation between Islamabad and Pyongyang became public when Pakistan tested a No-dong (renamed
Ghauri) in April 1998. North Korean missile crews helped Pakistan with the test launch (IISS 2002: 1). The US State Department determined that this transfer violated the MTCR and imposed sanctions on Pakistan’s Khan Research Laboratories and North Korea’s Ch’anggwang Trading Company (IISS 2002: 1). This did not stop missile cooperation between Islamabad and Pyongyang. In 1999, the Indian custom officials seized the North Korean ship Ku Wol San at Kandla in Gujarat, India (IISS 2002: 2). Search revealed that it was carrying missile components and metal casings to Pakistan.

There were indications that Pakistan provided centrifuge technology to North Korea in exchange for No-dung missiles in the late 1990s. Pakistan was interested in obtaining intermediate-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear payloads for which No-dong suited. North Korea was interested in obtaining an alternative to plutonium production. US intelligence analysts concluded that Pakistan was the source of North Korea’s uranium enrichment technology (IISS 2002: 2). It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions over whether Pakistani governments were complicit in deals with North Korea.

Towards the end of the decade of nineties there was a progress towards a rapprochement between the North and the South. Pyongyang started to clear mines in the DMZ and worked towards establishing road and railway links with the South. North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Il publicly agreed to a continuous deployment of US troops in South Korea. He stressed that their presence was a threat only as long as the relationship between North Korea and US remained hostile (Sigal 2001: 96).

External balancing: China

During the Cold War years, geopolitics and ideology made it possible for North Korea to extract maximum benefit from China be it economy, military or security. The end of the Cold War changed regional and global scenarios. The collapse of the socialism in 1991 produced serious problems for North Korea in every sphere, national security being affected most. The end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the Sino-Soviet conflict etc., transformed the condition for maintaining the “lips-to-teeth” ties. The reduction of Soviet and Chinese aid and the continued negative economic growth in the 1990s have been the major blows to DPRK. South Korea had allied with
the US and was building up its armed forces, while North Korea was losing its bond with Russia and PRC. Changes in the strategic context of China-ROK relations played an important part in DPRK’s perceptions of China. In the post-Cold War and post-disintegration of Soviet Union and Socialist camp, China’s foreign policy priorities also got changed substantially. China mended its fences with US as it needed US technology, and managerial know-how and capital.

Although communism has collapsed today, North Korea can still find common ideological grounds with China. China is practically the only ally of North Korea. It has been one of the countries that have traditional relations with North Korea and still helping North Korea’s regime to survive. It upholds a high level of diplomatic and military contacts with North Korea. China’s main desire with regard to North Korea is the preservation of stability. It has played an important role in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Any disturbance would cause apprehension within China. China’s influence over North Korea is also an asset for China in its negotiation with the US. China on its own part has been persuading North Korea to open up its economy.

After China began to carry out policy of reform, North Korea from time to time criticized China. Nevertheless, North Korea could not afford to lose China’s help because of the many types of assistance it receives from China. Because of this, China enjoys some influence in North Korea. At the same time the PRC, having embarked on economic reforms that brought her out of diplomatic isolation established diplomatic links with the ROK in August 1992. Pyongyang-Beijing ties reached a nadir in September 1992, a month after Beijing’s diplomatic recognition with Seoul, when the Beijing leadership renounced its support for the DPRK’s reunification plan (Kirby 1996). The PRC’s economic restructuring programme led Beijing to put pressure on Pyongyang to intensify contacts with Seoul, Washington, Tokyo, to engage in domestic economic reform and to accept a simultaneous admission of the two Koreas into the UN. China’s support for the DPRK’s national security was strongly reiterated in June 1994 when Choe Kwang, chief of the general staff of the North Korean army, was warmly greeted in Beijing by President Jiang Zemin, who reaffirmed China’s ‘unwavering’ alliance with North Korea. China had the ability to scupper sanctions both via a veto in the Security Council and through continuing to supply North Korea with essentials in the event of
sanctions (Gills 1996: 239-240). China has been reinforcing its political and security relationship with North Korea, as witnessed by its decision in October 1994 to withdraw the delegation of the Chinese People’s volunteers from the Military Armistice Commission (MAC). This move confirmed to DPRK policy, wherein the DPRK abandoned MAC on 29 April 1994 and established an alternative body known as the KPA Panmunjom Mission (Gills 1996: 250).

China is busy building closer ties with South Korea. At the same time, in keeping with its security interests, China is also trying to avoid the North Korean collapse. It has a long land border with the poorest states of North Korea and runs the risk of being burdened with refugees. It is in China’s economic and political interests to develop a long-term friendly and cooperative partnership with Seoul. The North-South Korea confrontation became the hard core of Asia’s cold war. Former USSR and PRC have already established formal ties with South Korea with regard to foreign affairs. However, the US, Japan and other Western countries have not normalized their relations with the DPRK yet.

By the early 1990s, with economic pressure forcing both the erstwhile USSR and the PRC into closer trading relations with the ROK, the DPRK could no longer rely on these two permanent members for support. Beijing relations with Seoul grew as a direct result of its focus on economic expansion. The trade relationship between China and South Korea exceeds that between China and North Korea. In 1979, a total volume of trade between China and South Korea was only $19 million; in 1992 the number reached $8.2 billion. Bilateral trade between the two countries increased throughout the 1980s and in the year 1991-1992 nearly doubled from the previous year. South Korean investment in China has increased in the 1990s. Two-way trade amounted to $11 billion in 1993, with ROK investment in the PRC rising by $1 billion since diplomatic links were implemented in 1992. By then China became South Korea’s third largest trade partner, while South Korea was China’s fifth. In 1995, the bilateral trade volume reached $17 billion. In 1991, South Korea’s investment in China was $81.5 million and by June 1996, $2.9 billion.
Overall military and security contacts and exchanges between China and North Korea showed a decline. A 1993 analysis claimed that ‘the majority of the Korean People’s Army Chemical Weapons inventory has been imported mainly from the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China’ (Bermudez 1993: 227). Since 1994 the Chinese leaders have reduced economic aid to North Korea due to the secretive nature of Kim Jong-II regime. It can be concluded that after the regime of Kim Il Sung in North Korea (1994) and Deng Xiaoping in China (1997), the great unity between these two allies showed deterioration. Arms transfers from China have been reduced to almost minimal in the 1990s.

Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, in a systematic 1995 survey of Chinese elite perceptions of policy options in Korea, found that ‘Chinese leaders would be likely to consider military intervention only if they perceived Chinese security to be directly threatened or if the war had begun as a clear cut case of unprovoked aggression by South Korea or the US.’ They concluded that China would have “few ideological concerns” about the loss of a communist ally through Korean unification. The Chinese have insisted that their knowledge of the true situation in the North has been limited, and their ability to influence North Korea minimal.

However, a combination of anti-American feeling and the nuclear crisis helped to restore some of their former intimacy, although trading and military links have always been maintained, and the PRC-DPRK defense agreement is still valid. Tao Bingwei, the leading North Korean specialist in the Chinese foreign ministry, expressed Chinese, their suspicion that the emerging US relationship with Pyongyang is the first step in a long term U.S. plan to prevent Chinese influence in Korea. Warning Washington, he said at an international conference in 1996 ‘if one country should attempt to use its development of relations with the DPRK as a means to promote certain strategy of its own, it will add complex or new factors to the Korean issue’ (Harrison 2001: 78).

In this decade DPRK resisted pressure to democratize along the Western model of representative democracy. Kim Il Sung stressed that to fight against common enemy; the new emerging countries should attach prime importance to unity and subordinate everything to this and should closely bond together, transcend the difference in the social system, political view and religious belief. North Korea proposed of making a long-term
peace arrangement to replace the armistice agreement. In April 1996, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman stated that ‘we seek a long term peace arrangement to replace the armistice agreement since the war has been over for such a long time.’ In 1999, the visit of Kim Yong Nam to Beijing signaled a positive trend. Foreign Minister Pae Nam Sun also visited Beijing and Kim Jong Il visited the PRC Embassy in Pyongyang. His first foreign trip as DPRK leader to Beijing just prior to the summit made clear the significance he attached to relations with China.

The experience of the Korean War and the Cold War made for enemy images. This picture contrasts with the one after 1990 i.e., the end of the Cold War. Non-dialogue of the past gave way to a normalized relationship between Beijing and Seoul in 1992. Beijing supported Seoul on a number of political and security issues against the wishes of its longtime ally in Pyongyang. Beijing opposed the North’s derive for nuclear weapons, it has supported Seoul’s United Nation’s membership.

Despite the improvement in Sino-South Korean ties, China strengthened its traditional and special relation with North Korea. In interviews with South Korean scholars and media in January 1999, PRC’s Ambassador to South Korea Wu Dawei asserted that the 1961 Sino-DPRK Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Agreement is alive, and there are no revision negotiations of any kind in the works. He further said that the Korean peninsula problem has been used as an excuse for military buildup by external powers (Kim and Lee 2002: 122). He stated that China couldn’t consent to a forced inspection of the suspected underground nuclear site in North Korea. On 15 March 1999, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji declared, following the conclusion of the National People’s Congress that ‘North Korea is a sovereign state, so it is none of our business whether North Korea develops a missile or whether it researches and develops nuclear weapons’ (as cited in Kim and Lee 2002: 122).

China had deep suspicion over the US hegemonic intentions in the region. The same feeling was shared by North Korea. Dr Li Sung Hyok, the director of Pyongyang’s International Relations University, argued, ‘US imperialism violated our sovereignty, interfered in our affairs and made obstacles to the reunification of our country. The US has demanded that we reduce the level of propaganda against them. Yet given the historical aggression of the US and the obstacles placed by them to our unification it is natural that our people should have an antipathy and hatred to the aggressors’ (Smith 1996: 100).
There was a rapid deterioration in Sino-American relations in 1999. Events such as, the US-Japan defense cooperation, their development of the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system, the US/NATO war against Yugoslavia, the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo war in early May 1999 worsened the Sino-US relationship (Kim and Lee 2002) and the Chinese threat perception. The American image once again was of a hegemonic power through the containment of China. According to one Chinese security analyst, Kosovo was a turning point causing a shift in Chinese thinking on the matter of tolerance for US forces in Asia. China now felt surrounded by the US-Japan and US-ROK alliances (Kim and Lee 2002). The Kosovo crisis also set an alarm in North Korea. It felt the need to improve its relationship with People’s Republic of China as its security environment was threatened and it was determined to improve its military power. These events helped in repairing the strained relationship between China and North Korea.

US global behaviour clashed directly with China’s national interests (its economic priorities, reunification with Taiwan, continued CCP rule). US regional behaviour in East Asia—which is the locus of Chinese diplomatic and economic activity – including the strengthened US-Japan alliance, their joint development of the Theatre Missile Development (TMD) system and its continued weapons sales to Taiwan reflects the US hegemonic posture. As China saw the US as the present threat to its interests in Northeast Asia, the Sino-North Korean relationship was revived. With such shared security fears, China’s Korea policy and vice versa was readjusted with time. China’s displeasure with its socialist ally in the buffer zone was put aside. It readjusted its Korea policy at a time when North Korea was launching a diplomatic outreach in an unprecedented way. China began to see the US as the greater challenge to its strategic interest in the region. What was important to China was the utility of North Korea in its national security consideration. That is why China’s North Korea policy has shown some continuity.

There was a visible improvement in Sino-North Korean relations from 1999 to 2001. PRC took the initiative in the renormalizing process. The Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan made a five day visit to Pyongyang in April 1999. Two months later, in June 1999, a fifty member North Korean delegation led by Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA), President Kim Yong Nam made a state visit to China. It improved the Sino-North Korean strategic partnership. In October, the same year, on the fiftieth anniversary of the
establishment of the diplomatic relations, the Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan made a visit to Pyongyang to expand bilateral ties. North Korean leader Kim Jong Il chose Beijing for his first-ever state visit in May 2000 since June 1983, which was followed by another visit to China in January 2001, as well as the country’s diplomatic activities. Inter-Korean Pyongyang summit with the support of Beijing was highlighted. The trip was publicly praised for the Sino-DPRK renormalization process. The Beijing summit consolidated the DPRK-China friendship. In October 2000, China dispatched a military delegation to Pyongyang, headed by Defense Minister Chi Haotian, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into the Korean war- the ‘War to resist America and aid Korea,’ in Beijing’s lingo- and to reaffirm Sino-DPRK military ties and a civilian delegation to Seoul headed by Prime Minister Zhu Rongji to elevate Sino-ROK relations from a “cooperative partnership” to a “full-scale cooperative partnership”, pushing the US and Japan to the sidelines (Kim and Lee 2002: 115). For the first time in eleven years, Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a visit to Pyongyang in September 2001 to renormalize their relationship.

**Sino-North Korean nuclear collaboration**

Since North Korea was dependent on China for security, it became top priority for China to prevent North Korea from collapse. China made a commitment to take military action if the ally were attacked by a common adversary. If its ally, based on its own perception of threat entered into conflict with the adversary, then China would not involve itself. At the same time the PRC would dislike seeing the Korean peninsula be controlled by any big power. It objected to the use of coercive measures, sanctions, threat of veto (through a US sponsored UN Security Council resolution condemning North Korea) etc., against North Korea. China’s threat of a veto prevented the Bush administration from discussing the North Korean nuclear crisis in the UN Security Council. It often insisted to seek resolution through negotiation. China’s stand served Pyongyang’s interest. It desired to maintain and if possible to increase her influence on Korean peninsula. It wanted to play the role of a broker between the two Koreas. China also wanted to minimize and if possible to eliminate the influence of the US and Japan (through South Korea) on the Korean peninsula. It did not want Korean peninsula to be the cockpit of Asian armed confrontation.
North Korea’s nuclear and missile programme became an important security issue among Chinese bilateral relationship with other powers of the region. North Korea’s nuclear brinkmanship was the first nuclear proliferation crisis of the post-cold war era. It also created problems in the management of Sino-DPRK asymmetrical interdependence. North Korea used its nuclear threat in bargaining with its adversaries. The region lacked effective measures to check this. China was expected to play a key role in checking North Korea’s nuclear weapons development programme. It may also be observed that China takes the advantage of the North Korean nuclear programme in negotiating with the US. China abstained from voting on North Korea’s nuclear issue at the United Nations and the IAEA. It is a key player in any effort to meet North Korea’s nuclear challenge. Based on inspections of North Korea’s nuclear facilities in 1992, the IAEA found a number of discrepancies regarding the North Korean nuclear materials inventory. The US Secretary of State Colin Powell warned Chinese Vice-President Hu Jintao that the hard-liners in Washington were willing to use force to effect regime change in North Korea. During this period, PRC held discussions with DPRK to resolve the dispute and promoted dialogue between the US and the DPRK. It decided to seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis and took a number of steps to restrain its ally’s move. It also reflected that China would accept limited international sanctions on the DPRK, the PRC’s abstention on an IAEA resolution to suspend technical aid to North Korea, and warnings that if their actions should provoke a US action they should not expect the Chinese to save them (Sun 1994: A20). The Chinese foreign ministry stated that it had no prior knowledge of North Korea’s plan to test-fire a ballistic missile and urged all relevant parties to negotiate in order to safeguard peace.

China opposed the international application of trade sanctions against North Korea. It counseled for negotiation rather than confrontation. China appeared to accept North Korea’s plea that their nuclear weapons were intended to counter the perceived threat from the United States though China had argued that the DPRK’s legitimate security interests must take into account the goal of denuclearising the peninsula (Chambers 2005: 43).
Present condition between North Korea and China

The changing international balance of forces did force one change in the North Korean tactics. The DPRK had consistently opposed a 'two Koreas policy' or cross recognition which would have permitted the ROK and the DPRK to join the UN as two separate states. The policy could be maintained because of support from the erstwhile USSR and the PRC (Smith 1996). China has changed from being the ally of North Korea against South Korea and the US to prevent the arming of North Korea with weapons of mass destruction. China's main objective is to maintain peace and stability for its economic growth.

The Korean peninsula represented the principal strategic area where the Chinese and US interests clashed. The Korean War and the US-Japan security treaty posed a serious security threat to China. Both China and North Korea believed that a unipolar world dominated by America would pose a challenge to their respective national security. China had always advocated the normalization of US and Japanese relations with North Korea to balance the Chinese and Soviet move towards normalization with the South Korea (to preserve the balance). There was a rapid deterioration in Sino-American relations in 1999.

In the 1990s other sets of asymmetrical mutual interests and perceptions have emerged namely, Beijing-Seoul, Beijing-Pyongyang and Seoul-Pyongyang. Differences in domestic and foreign policy between China and North Korea make it difficult to sustain the traditional "lips to the teeth relationship". Yet China is not likely to end its support for the North Korea. China supports a unified Korea and to maintain the status quo of the two Koreas means to continue its support to the weaker DPRK at any cost. Beijing has come up with the understanding that any weakening of influence over North Korea would degrade its strategic status and interest in Northeast Asia in general and Korean peninsula in particular. Beijing's goals are to enhance Chinese influence in the region and to reduce the influence of other powers over Korea.

As Campbell and Reiss (2001: 62) stated, 'If the road to Pyongyang runs through Beijing, Washington should expect to be charged a toll. This toll could be quite high'. The Chinese and North Korea perception of the US threat continues. Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro in The Coming Conflict with China (1997) concluded that China is
"aggressively anti-American" and it has "nuclear weapons deliberately targeted at the United States" (as cited in Yi 2000: 74). This perception indicates the continuation of some sort of security relationship between the PRC and DPRK.

The political and ideological affinity that exists between Beijing and Pyongyang may have acted as a binding force between the two states in an era of communist collapse. China is concerned with North Korea's development and will oppose any action that will lead to its collapse. China often pressed the US to offer DPRK a pledge of non-aggression to dilute North Korea's sense of insecurity. China continues to support North Korea's recognition from U.S. and Japan, which it regards as a necessary step towards reducing Pyongyang's sense of isolation and insecurity. China has succeeded in persuading the US to support North Korea's economic policy.

North Korea has earned a reputation as being "the power of the weak". In spite of weakness versus the US, North Korea used it to its advantage. New perceptions of priorities influence the relationship between the major actors. But the cold war perceptions are still disturbing the relationship between the North and the South. The situation on the Korean Peninsula does not seem to be moving towards stability or it can be said that the crisis is the same due to imbalance of power between North Korea and South Korea. The North-South summit of 2000 opened the way to a new wave of diplomatic relations between North Korea and other countries (Hoare 2007: 57). Since early 2000, North Korea has made diplomatic offensives. It has established diplomatic relations with Italy, Australia and Philippines and agreed to move towards normalizing ties with Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand. All EU states, except France, have now established diplomatic relations with North Korea. While only Britain, Germany and Sweden from Western Europe, and Poland, Bulgaria, and Rumania from Eastern Europe, have embassies in Pyongyang, the EU has an ECHO (The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department) office and other countries send staff from time to time. Finland even maintains an office. Both Italy and Switzerland have aid agencies present in Pyongyang (Hoare 2007: 57). The European Union has been a significant humanitarian aid donor to North Korea since the mid 1990s, and has also promoted energy development. The EU joined the executive board of the KEDO, which oversaw the construction of two new light-water nuclear reactors in North Korea and other Agreed Framework energy provisions (Huntley 2006: 727). These situations reflect North Korea's efforts to overcome the perceived danger to its security and survival.
Thus, the shadow of the Cold War still persists. The US President George W. Bush labeled the North Korean leadership as untrustworthy on 7 March 2001 in the presence of South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. He in his State of the Union address of 29 January 2002, referred to North Korea along with Iraq and Iran as constituting an 'axis of evil'. North Korea's UN envoy in New York said on 7 February 2002, "Nice words will be answered with nice words" (Schmidt 2002: 3). He said that US must decide if it wants dialogue or hostile relations with Pyongyang. Thus from Pyongyang point of view, the major dimensions of the crises were long and unbroken period of American nuclear hegemony in East Asia. This hegemonic practice was interpreted as clear threat to North Korean security.

IV

Summing up

The BoT theory suggests that states form alliances to counter perceived threats. Geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions affect the threat level. During the Cold War, the Sino-DPRK balance of threat was forged to counter the perception of the ROK-US hegemony in the region. China embarked on an enduring strategic relationship with North Korea. The Sino-DPRK alliance did effectively balance the threat posed by the ROK-US alliance. This case study supports the BoT theory.

During the Cold War, the interests of USA, USSR, China and Japan intersected on the Korean peninsula. It was the frontier of the confrontation between the East and the West. Even after the Cold War, the four powers had vested interests on the peninsula. The central actors in the conflict were North and South Korea. As long as the US maintains its role as the protector of South Korea and the US-ROK defense treaty is in effect, inter-Korean security relationship can be viewed in the broader framework. North Korea continues to address security issues i.e., nuclear and missile programmes to the US. The North fears that the more powerful South would overwhelm its political system, ideology, institutions, etc. But the main threat emanates from the US. Pyongyang will demand the withdrawal of US combat aircraft with offensive potential, which since the experience of the second Gulf War, the Kosovo war and the Afghan war, represent the greatest threat to North Korea.
In terms of the case study examined here, China is the senior partner in alliance. China used North Korea as a buffer zone in order to secure its own border. It asserted that it did not possess any real diplomatic or political authority over North Korea. But China is now the only source of support for the North Korean regime. It is viewed as the only major power retaining some influence over North Korea. It provides security benefit and deterrence to North Korea against a common adversary. It provides military assistance, economic aid etc. to develop the defense capabilities of its ally. There is an asymmetric interdependence in assistance of all sorts (political, military, and economic). Presently, China is also serving as the venue for North Korea’s negotiations with South Korea, Japan and the United States. PRC tries to prevent anti-China coalition in East Asia. It recognizes the utility of Korea in projecting its identity as a great power. This is due to Pyongyang’s reliance on Beijing for moral (if not material) support. China also feels the need to sustain one of the few remaining socialist countries following the collapse of communism.

China’s security relationship and alliance policy towards North Korea are undergoing a change. While China has selectively reformed its economy and opened itself to the outside world, North Korea remains an isolated country. North Korea and North Korea’s ideological militancy bordering on its fanaticism is no longer China’s concern. In a word, China is a contented and satisfied power. North Korea can no longer depend on China’s umbrella. It can no longer rely in the same way on the Chinese guarantee of mutual assistance as it did in the 1950s.

The changes of the security environment in the Korean peninsula have brought changes in the security policy and the perceptions of the alliance between the alliance partners of the two camps. A broad scope of dialogue scarcely exists between North and South Korea and is not present between Washington and Pyongyang. To cope with the perceived threat, the North Korean regime is determined to unify the peninsula on its own terms. North Korea’s quest for ‘unification’ of two Koreas may be only rhetoric. China might continue to provide North Korea with the assistance needed to keep the North Korean regime survive.