Arrival of the Cold War on the Peninsula

A. The Cold War in Asia

The foundation of the Cold War between the two superpowers was based on the containment policies of the United States and USSR, in which both tried to check the spread of influence zone of each other across the globe. The process started unfolding in the various wartime conferences where the fate of the new global order was being decided. In Asia, the Truman administration re-evaluated the role of Japan in its strategic framework of the policy of containment (Segal 1996: 68). The US was in favour of forming an alliance with Japan, though many countries of the Asia Pacific had more serious apprehensions about the revival of Japanese militarism than the Soviet communism. After the communist take over of the Chinese mainland under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the US public opinion became more interested in extending the policy of containment in Asia. The ‘loss of China’ made the American government in 1949-50 to think seriously about the question of strategically well-calculated defence parameters in Asia also. The emerging situations warranted a
strategic judgment of whether or not South Korea, Taiwan and the Indochina should be included in the projected containment line.

In a speech in January 1950, the then US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, commended Asian nationalism and assured that the US was not willing to interfere in their internal matters. In the same speech, he indicated the prospect of an eminent rift between China and the Soviet Union. It is difficult to say how and in which context the Soviet Union took its cue from this speech and what was its impact on the outbreak of the Korean War, but the speech caused a deep and far reaching reverberation in the US polity. The Democrat government was criticised by the right wing Republicans for pursuing a reactive policy in Asia. General Macarthur and many other army officers were not happy with the Euro-centric Cold War strategy of the US. They felt that the significance of Pacific theatre has been belittled by the administration and could be dangerous for the American interests.

In the mid March of 1950, the US drafted NSC-68, which argued that so far the US military weakness had prevented the policy of containment to be successful. Given its emphasis on military build-up, it is clear that the document was not a blueprint of limited war such as the Korean conflict, but was built on a hypothesis of total war. However, it is one of the ironies of the history that this document became the blueprint for expansion of military appropriation that dated from the initiation of the fighting on the Korean Peninsula. The NSC-68 remained unapproved and was not implemented till the beginning of the Korean War. After getting information about the North Korean “attack” on South Korea, Truman decided to send American ground forces to Korea. At the same time he announced increase in the military assistance to French in Indochina and interposition of naval forces to safeguard Taiwan. Thus the US entered the Cold War with a Hot War in the Asia. Gradually, the US policy

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1 Initially, it seems that the US administration was not in a mood to use the Korean conflict as an instrument with which to accomplish its reorientation of national security policy until it was clear that the conflict would not erupt into general war with the Soviet Union.
2 Walter LaFeber has given the details about the NSC 68 and its implication for the Korean Peninsula and the region (LaFeber 1974).
makers began to conceptualize security of their allies in the region as the security of its own 'new frontiers'.

B. Korea in the Vortex\(^4\) of the Cold War

Division of Korean Peninsula along the 38\(^{th}\) parallel and emergence of two regimes in either side of the line is projected as the beginning of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula. But the seeds of this rivalry were sown during the Second World War itself.\(^5\) The signs of change in the US policy towards Korea began to be noticed in the first quarter of 1943, although it was in the 'general context of American thinking regarding the post-war disposition of former colonial areas' (Cumings 1973: 40-47). Franklin Roosevelt was fascinated by the idea of an international trusteeship for Korea. In a meeting with the then British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, on March 27, 1943, he 'mentioned Korea and Indochina as areas ripe for post war trusteeship' (Cumings 1973: 40-47). The leaders of the US, Great Britain and China met at Cairo on November 20, 1943 to discuss a common strategy and post-war policy. Their first and foremost aim was to cut down to size the ambitions of Japan. Having some immediate interests in Korea, they agreed to follow a steady policy in this regard. To console the Korean public and also to make them feel that they were really concerned about Korea's future, a formulation was worked out. President Roosevelt wanted to liberate Korea from the Japanese colonial rule but was not in favour of granting full and complete independence to Korea.

Meanwhile, Churchill came out with an ambiguous phrase 'in due course', which was incorporated in the text of the declaration. The paragraph on Korea read

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\(^3\) An invaluable source for getting a real picture of this change in the US foreign policy and emergence of its 'new frontiers' in the foreign policy making could be gauged from the US government sources (Division of Historical Research 1951).

\(^4\) The word 'vortex', which describes the situation of the Korean Peninsula in the Cold War very aptly, and which became cliché in coming days, was basically a gift of Gregory Henderson to the terminology of debate on the Korean issue.

\(^5\) In his article Okonogy Masao emphasizes that 'basically the Korea War was a domestic problem over the legitimacy of political power.' Due to specific nature of the Korean liberation and strategic significance of the peninsula, the domestic problem became internationalised (Masao 1977: 299).
as: 'the three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea and determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent' (The Department of State 1951 in Cho Soong-sung 1967: 20). The phrase ‘in due course’ was a cause for considerable concern among Koreans. The Koreans were expecting that the US would reveal something positive and concrete about their immediate independence (Park Hong-kyu 1989). But the United States did not come out with any such statement. Though Syngman Rhee issued a series of statements condemning the phrase and sent letters to Roosevelt asking for a clarification about the US intention, there was no response. The objectives of the United States further became obvious in the Tehran and Yalta conferences in which Washington reiterated the idea to put Korea under trusteeship and ensure a definite role for the US in the post-colonial, post-World War situation in Korea.

Roosevelt vaguely proposed trusteeship for forty years without having a proper plan for such a long period, which "indicates that Roosevelt’s approach to the problem of Korean independence was lacking insight" (Cho Soong-sung 1967: 20). Thus, Roosevelt not only failed to understand the aspirations of the Koreans for immediate independence but also failed to reach at any formal agreement with Stalin on the future of Korea. After the dramatic shift in balance of military forces in the Far East in favour of Allied Forces, with US dropping atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the US realized the urgency of arriving at an understanding about the arrangement to be made for accepting the surrender of Japanese forces. Under these circumstances, the US proposal to the Soviet Union to receive the Japanese surrender to north of 38th parallel and that of the United States to the south of the line, was transmitted to the Allies on 15 August, 1945 (Cumings 1974: 46 and Henderson 1968: 121-122). However, Moscow had a clear policy about the peninsula and it was more interested in establishing a friendly regime in Korea rather than trusteeship. They were not averse to the idea of division of the peninsula, if establishment of a friendly regime in whole of the peninsula was not possible. At the same time, the USSR was
also not willing to spoil the amicable atmosphere of settlement process on the issue of Korean peninsula (Masao 1977: 300-310).

Apparently the two superpowers, the US and USSR pledged that neither side would unilaterally attempt to incorporate the Korean peninsula into their sphere of influence. But both had their own agenda regarding the future of the Korean peninsula. Throughout the wartime conferences, the two powers shared the opinion that Korea should not belong exclusively to the sphere of influence of either (Iriye 1974: 126-127). The Moscow agreement of December 27, 1945, proposed that the Korean Peninsula should be placed under a four-power trusteeship for a period of up to five years. The formula was based on a mutual understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union, beginning with the Cairo Declaration.

Apart from the Cold War structure, domestic conflict over the legitimacy of political power also contributed in declaring the peninsula as an “Asian Flashpoint” (Iriye 1974: 300). The Moscow Agreement was presented to Korean people as the sole option available to them, which was supposed to be consonant with “international reality”. At that time, there were two distinct movements to establish autonomously a unified Korean government in the Korea. One was the Korean People’s Republic set up in Seoul on 6 September 1945, the day before the American troops were scheduled to land in Korea. The other was the provisional government of the Republic of Korea based in Chungking, which boasted of a history extending back to the March First independence movement of 1919. The first movement was a coalition between the Korean communists headed by Pak Hong-yong and the left-wing nationalists. The later was supported by prominent nationalists such as Rhee Syng-man, who had returned to Korea from the United States in October 1945 and Kim Koo and Kim Kyu-sik, who had returned from China a few weeks later. The two groups engaged in a short negotiation to explore the possibility of merger but the talks failed. Each party insisted on an exclusive title of legitimacy and by the time the Moscow Agreement was announced at the end of December 1945, there was no room for compromise. It was quite obvious from the beginning itself that the merger would not be possible.
The provisions of the Moscow Agreement were meant to enjoin Korean people to choose between trusteeship and partition. However, at that time, Korea was not having the kind of national solidarity, which was required to effectively meet such an imposition. Song Chin-u and Rhee Syng-man were among the few leaders who were able to comprehend the true intent of the agreement (Iriye 1974: 300). But both of them took opposite stands—Song chose trusteeship, whereas Rhee opted for partition. Initially, Kim Koo was strongly against the provisions of the trusteeship or partition but as trends towards partition became more pronounced, he accepted it. The centrist leaders such as Kim Kyu-sik and Lyun Woon-hyang shifted their positions from one to another options.

Between the initial chaos and the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, domestic and international politics inter-twined in a complicated manner. As they fought for a new order on the peninsula, external forces clashed over such matter as the establishment of provisional government under the Soviet Union and the US Joint Commission, general elections under the supervision of the UN and withdrawal of Soviet and American troops, in addition to the issue of trusteeship. Each external force sought domestic allies to look after its interests in the peninsula and domestic groups in turn looked for international aid and sponsorship for their own causes in the power struggle. The process of internationalization and internalization of the Korean conflict, combined with the traditional tendency of Korean politics to isolate moderate while extremists decided the political course of the country, induced a pattern of political instability which later would be reproduced on a larger scale in the context of the Cold War. This was also a period of resistance by Korean radical groups against the USSR-US cooperation, which had been effective since the Cairo declaration. This is evident both in Rhee’s insistence on an independent government for South Korea and in the strong resistance by Pak Hon-yong and other left-wing radicals against the US military government.

During his speech at Chongup on June 3, 1946, Rhee openly expressed his demand for an independent South Korean government. Rhee hoped that the US
should come out with a solution of trusteeship of the Korean peninsula because it was a product of the USSR-US cooperation of yesteryears. Because he was confident that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union would inevitably decline, he was not worried about the partition of Korea. For Rhee, cooperation with the communists was basically an eyewash and Korea could be unified only through military force.  

Similarly, South Korean communists such as Pak Hon-yong, who failed in establishing the Korean People’s Republic and were being expelled from the mainstream of the Korean communist movement, acted in accordance with the Soviet policy as Rhee did with the US. The objective of South Korea communists was “to make it difficult for American troops to remain in Korea and to erode Korean confidence in them. Meanwhile, Kim Il-sung was propagating that the main enemy of the Korean people was the group of reactionaries around Kim Koo and Rhee Syngman. His continued reluctance to directly criticize the US military government showed that the radical policies of the South Korean communist did not have the consent of the Soviet Union and North Korea.

The defeat and unconditional surrender of Japan on 14 August 1945 and the decision taken by the US and the Soviet forces to clearly demarcate two zones in the Korean Peninsula, opened up a new phase of relations between the two superpowers. The Koreans living in the area south of the 38th parallel came under the direct governance of the USA Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). This was because Korea technically came under the occupation zone of the allied powers, since Japan itself had come under the occupation of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP). The policies and programmes pursued by the USAMGIK, especially those concerning the political and administrative matters, were contentious.

The Moscow Declaration of December 1945, the establishment of the US-USSR joint committee, and the issues regarding the transfer of political and

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6 President Rhee expressed at various occasion that military actions to unite Korea was an ever present alternative to Seoul. For the adventurous South Korean acts and utterances on the reunification issue, see (Cumings 1981).
administrative power to the Koreans through a duly elected government to replace alien occupation became extremely contentious issues. In the joint committee discussion, the intentions of both the superpowers became quite obvious. The USSR insisted on barring all the organizations from taking part in the consultation process that were opposing the Moscow plan. The US position was that no group and individual should be penalized for having exercised their right to freedom of expression. In view of virtually unanimous opposition to the Moscow plan in Korea, acceptance of Soviet position would have resulted in barring all the political groups except communists. The differences in opinion were not born out of any goodwill regarding the Korean people but it emanated from the beginning of cleavage between the US and USSR regarding the post-War global order. This was the first instance when the superpowers took two apparently opposite stands on the issue of Korean settlement.

After the failure of bilateral talks, the US was willing to raise the issue in the United Nations General Assembly but Moscow was not in favour of involvement of any such international organization, on the ground that such a conference was outside the scope of the Moscow Agreement (The US Department of State 1948: 43-47). The US was willing to take the issue to the UN with the hope that it had a majority in the UN and any resolution supported by the US was going to be passed by the UN General Assembly. The US was able to get a resolution passed in November 1947 from the UN General Assembly, which called for two significant actions in Korea. In the first place, an election was to be held under the observation of the UN commission. In the second place, a national government for the whole of Korea was to be established with the help of the United Nations Commission. But in the process, Soviet support was very much needed and without it any election in the northern part of the peninsula was not possible. The USSR blamed Washington for failure of the talks and reiterated that the UN should not make recommendations on the problem of Korea (Goodrich 1956: 36). Through a UN General Assembly resolution, a United

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7 Initially, even the communist objected to the plan but after getting clue from Pyongyang they supported the plan (Berger 1957: 31).
Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) was established and assigned for the elections in the Korea (The US Department of State 1948: 70). When it became clear that any election in the whole Korean peninsula was not possible, the interim committee of the UN decided for the elections in the southern part of the peninsula.\(^8\) The creation of UNTCOK and its decision to hold elections in the south of the 38\(^{th}\) parallel on 10 May 1948, led to the establishment of the state and government of the Republic of Korea on 15 August 1948.

The proclamation of a republican form of government with the constitutional commitment to liberal democracy through an elected legislative body called the National Assembly was a historic development in southern part of Korea. It is clear that the south of the 38\(^{th}\) parallel, where two thirds of the Korean population lived, would be placed under the USAMGIK and the decision to establish a republican and democratic form of government with a written constitution, was certainly influenced by the history of American political institutions and American national interest.

In the northern part of the peninsula, various people's committees, which were formed after the Japanese surrender, became a stepping-stone in the process of the establishing a communist government. On August 25 1945, the Soviet command announced the formation of the "Executive Committee of the Korean People." In February 1947 the "People's Assembly of North Korea" was established and finally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea came into being (Tavorov 1950: 625). The birth of two regimes on the peninsula was symbolic of concretization of politics of the Cold War in the region. Both regimes put forth their claim on the whole of the peninsula and presented themselves as the true representative of the Korean people. In the process of getting legitimacy, they tried to acquire as much international support as possible. At the same time, they also tried to work on the development aspect of their part to strengthen their legitimacy. The animosity between the two regimes made the peninsula and the region a laboratory of the Cold War politics.

\(^8\) A detailed description of terms of references assigned to the committee has been given by Leon Gordenker (Gordenker 1959: 65).
Less than four months after the emergence of the government of Republic of Korea, the United States initiated an important move to seek the approval of the UN General Assembly at its third session in 1948 to get its draft resolutions declaring the ROK government as the only "lawfully constituted" government in the Korean Peninsula approved. The American draft was passed. The implication was clear. It meant that the other government, i.e., the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that was proclaimed on September 9, 1948 was not a duly constituted on the basis of the free will of the electorate. It also meant that the United States, which had played a decisive role in the processes and events leading to the establishment of the Republic of Korea, would make endeavour for its international recognition both in the UN and outside. Given the active role played by the US from 1945 to 1948 in the creation of the Republic of Korea, it was not surprising that the US was the first country that recognised it. The next two years, the Korea-US relations were mainly concerned with three issues.

- International political and diplomatic support to the new government in Seoul.
- Strengthening the anti-communist ideological and political orientation and programmes of the new government.
- Ensuring substantive-economic aid from the US

The intensification of the civil war in China, the concomitant reverses for the US in China and the reports that the communist regime in North Korea was consolidating, especially by raising its huge People's Army, not only made the US to reverse its policies in Japan but also strengthened its military ties with South Korea.

Although two regimes came into being in quick succession on the Korean Peninsula and both managed to get recognition from their respective ideological allies


10 In December 1948, the Republic of Korea-United States Agreement on Aid Was signed. Under the agreement, South Korea received $73.1 million as assistance to reconstruction.
in the international arena, neither of them accepted the concept of one nation and two states. The Seoul government steadfastly maintained that it alone was the only lawful government in the peninsula and cited the 12 December 1948 Resolution in the UN General Assembly. It further maintained that the regime in Pyongyang had been foisted by the Soviet Union and therefore, it had to be ousted. It exhorted its people to “March towards North” and eliminate the North Korean “puppet regime”. The US endorsed the political ideological stand taken by the Seoul government vis-à-vis the Pyongyang regime. The regime in the North on its part advanced juridical, political and administrative claims over the whole peninsula and accused the Rhee Syng-man government of having been foisted by “US imperialism.” It further maintained that the UN had no locus-standi to discuss, let alone decide, the fate of the peninsula and thus the US had “manipulated” the UN recognition for South Korea. More importantly, the unwillingness on the part of the regimes to accept the territorial division of the peninsula and the concept of one nation and two states led to mounting tension and frequent clashes all along the 38th parallel. According to an analyst, the peninsula was caught in a situation of “incipient civil war”, especially since 1948 and in the first half of 1950, the peninsula was drifting towards a dangerous situation of being on the threshold of a war.

When North Korean forces launched a coordinated attack all along the 38th parallel, a large-scale war broke out. Whatever might have been its assessment of the Korean situation in June 1950 and North Korea’s policies towards the South, the US quickly responded to the North Korean attacks at two levels. It sought to activate the Security Council and wanted it to militarily intervene in the southern part of Korea as North Korean soldiers took control of Seoul in a lightning speed and pushed the Rhee

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11 Even after successive acceptance of existence of other in 1972 Agreement, and Basic Agreement of 1991, simultaneous entry into the UN, and the Joint declaration after the summit meet in 2000 still the two regimes, specially North Korea does not seem to accept the legitimacy of other regime on the peninsula (Park Han S. 2001).

12 Bruce Cumings has given an account on the origin of the Korean War on the basis that it is hard to ascertain that who started the war or when it was being started. He postulates an understanding that the Korean War did not began on 25th June 1950, rather there were successive developments from the both sides which over the year made the war inevitable and the final eruption of the war happened on 25th June 1950.
Syng-man government to operate from Pusan. American forces under General Douglas MacArthur landed at Inchon and tried to push the North Koreans to the north of the 38th parallel. For almost three years, the US fought the North Korean and Chinese troops and played the most crucial and decisive role in supporting South Korea but also virtually financed the entire war on behalf of the United Nations. Finally, the United States responded to the initiative of the Soviet Union to a cease-fire and actively worked for the successful completion of the “Armistice Agreement” on 23 July 1953 on behalf of the UN Command. The Armistice Agreement was technically not an inter-Korean agreement but a military agreement concluded between the UN Command led by the US on the one hand, and the representatives of North Korean Peoples Army and Chinese Peoples Volunteers, on the other.

The prompt, massive and unconditional military intervention by the US on the side of South Korea and the horrendous war completely changed the paradigm of Korea – US relations. The US lost more than 35,000 of its combatants and 20,000 non-combatants in a war fought outside Europe. The US concluded a truce instead of registering an outright victory. It is probably for these two reasons that the United States involvement did not cease with the cease-fire agreement and the US relations with South Korea came to be described as “special and unique”.

Security Paradigm of the Peninsula during the Cold War

After the surrender of Japan in the World War II, Korea was gradually sucked into the vortex of the Cold War. It is still inconclusive that whether the division was a product of domestic development or it was a by-product of the Cold War rivalry between the two superpowers. There could be a debate about the causes of the division, but there is a consensus about the significance of the Cold War on the formation of security paradigm of the peninsula (Henderson 1968, Gills 1996, Myers 2001, Moon Chung-in et.al. 2001).
More in accordance with the Neorealist theory of international relations, the post-World War II bipolar nature of the international system determined behaviours of units more than ideational and domestic factors. In the case of Korea also, ethnic homogeneity, cultural uniqueness, and common historical experiences proved to be less important in deciding the security structure. It is difficult to discern the relative weightage of the impact of international system as postulated by the Neorealists and impact of ‘soft issues’ considered to be important by the constructivists. By adopting an eclectic view it can be asserted that both the factors influenced the formation of security structure of the peninsula during the Cold War era.

A. Alliance System on the Peninsula

A distinct security alliance system emerged in Northeast Asian region in the Cold War era where North Korea and South Korea were in the opposing trilateral virtual-alliance systems. Whether the two regimes of the peninsula were willing to become part of either virtual-alliance system was not the issue. These two virtual-alliances were basically imposed on the two regimes, though with the course of time it became imperative for both of the regimes to conduct their foreign policies in the broader framework of these virtual-alliances. In one virtual-alliance system, the USSR, China and North Korea tried to coordinate their security policies regarding the Korean peninsula and the region. On the opposite virtual-alliance system, the US, Japan and South Korea tried to evolve a common security perspective. However, the nature of these virtual-alliance systems was quite different from the common characteristics of

13 The trilateral relationships among South Korean, Japan and the US or North Korea, China and the USSR could not be technically characterized as full-fledged trilateral alliances. In the first group, South Korea and Japan and in the second group, China and the Soviet Union did not have formal security treaty during the Cold War period or even after that. However, they did share common understanding about the security imperatives on the Korean peninsula. Victor D. Cha has termed these alliances as quasi-alliance, in which states are not formally security ally, though they share common security ally and understandings. Thus, he named South Korea and Japan relationship as a ‘quasi-alliance’ (Cha Victor D. 1999: 36-37). This study uses the term ‘virtual-alliance’ to describe the two trilateral groupings in the Northeast Asia. The term virtual-alliance has been used to describe a trilateral relationship between states, who broadly shared common understanding about security situation on the peninsula. It was quite expected that in case of any dire security situation, these states would come together and compete with their rival.
an alliance. No trilateral security treaty was ever agreed upon by these two virtual-alliances and basically they remained largely bilateral understandings.

Despite the apparent similarity of these two virtual-alliances of region, there remained a stark difference. Whereas in case of the virtual-alliance system which involved North Korea, Pyongyang had separate security treaties with Moscow and Beijing but there was an absence of any overt security understanding between the USSR and China especially after the early 1960s. On the other hand, South Korea had security treaty with the United States but it did not sign normalization treaty with Japan till 1965. In the South Korean virtual-alliance system, the US had security treaty with both Japan and South Korea. In the first virtual-alliance system, the US played the role of dominant partner over both of its allies and was able to even impose a coordinated policy objective, as it had separate security treaties with both. Contrary to it, in the second virtual-alliance system, North Korea had security treaties with both of its allies but it was not in a position to make other two agree for a coordinated policy. It led to make the first virtual-alliance system more effective than the second one and it greatly affected the impact and role of these two virtual-alliances in constituting the security architecture of the Korean peninsula in the Cold War period.

Figure 2.1: Comparative Alliance Structures of North and South Koreas
The security structure of the Korean peninsula was a distinct case of its own and its superficial comparison with the Eastern Europe becomes a hindrance in understanding of the unique peninsular dynamics. If we analyse the alliance system of Eastern European communist states and the alliance between North Korea and the USSR, Pyongyang maintained a 'relative autonomy' from the influence of the USSR and it was not much dependent on the USSR. The USSR did not enjoy a monopoly over the relationship of the communist regime in Pyongyang. The presence of China in the vicinity could be mentioned as the primary reason for North Korea having a manoeuvring space vis-à-vis both of its communist allies. Moreover, the intentions of North Korean leader Kim Il-sung to keep a safe distance from both the communist allies to maintain its autonomy of the foreign policy making, could be the other important reason which led to check monopolistic tendencies of the USSR and China (Jeong Jin-wi 1985). In the early 1960s, when a rift between China and the USSR erupted on the ideological stands of both the countries, North Korea concluded that it can not rely fully on either of them. The North Korean state ideology of *juche*, in a way, was a by-product of the problem of reliability and faith of Kim Il-sung regime on China or the USSR, in the wake of their mutual rift (Park Han S. 1998). Moreover, North Korea was also interested in showing its people and the world that they have full autonomy in foreign policy making of their country. The issue was also very important as North Korea had always claimed that South Korea is still in the occupation of foreign powers. North Korea asserted that northern part of the peninsula has been liberated from the Japanese but the southern part has gone into the hands of America after the evacuation of Japan.

The ideology of *juche* could be roughly translated as a policy of 'self-reliance' and this policy is spread into every walks of life in North Korea. One part of the policy of *juche* was related to military self-reliance and it was called *jawi*. In the 1960s, rather than making a communist security alliance in Northeast Asian region like Warsaw Pact in Europe or COMENCON, no multilateral security understanding among the three communist regimes of the region could be arrived at. North Korea
signed treaties of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with China and the USSR separately in 1961. There was no difference between the two treaties signed except that in the case of the Soviet Union, the treaty had to be renewed after every 25 years, whereas in case of China no renewal clause was there. It means that North Korea showed a tilt towards China. Although North Korea tried to maintain 'equidistance' with both of them, it could not forget the role of Chinese volunteers in the Korean War.

In Northeast Asia, the logic of the Cold War got substantially transformed in the mid-1970s. The conflict between the USSR and China over border problem along the Ussuri River led to emergence of new equations in the region (Cumings 1997b: 459). With Nixon's visit to China in 1971-72, the US was able to forge a relationship with the communist country. It led North Korea to rethink about its security strategy afresh. Actually, North Korea had to choose between China and Soviet Union in early 1960s and it chose a policy of 'equidistance' from both of them. North Korean relations with China also got sour during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1971) when Chinese authority made some critical remarks about the lavish lifestyle of Kim Il-sung. However, after the improvement in the relations of China and the US, again North Korea took side of China and tried to get similar kind of legitimacy from the US. When Carter administration announced its intention to gradually withdraw all the American troops from the Korean peninsula in 1977, Kim Il-sung referred to President Jimmy Carter as 'a man of justice' (Cumings 1997b: 460). North Korea gave prominence to China till the late 1970s, but after the beginning of 'second phase' of the Cold War, it tried to rectify its tilt toward China and 'from 1983 to 1987, Pyongyang tilted toward the Soviet Union' (Cumings 1997b: 460). However, after coming to power of Gorbachev, things changed significantly and the Soviet Union tried to withdraw its hands from many commitments abroad, including North Korea.

Cultural and historical factors were also crucial in bringing North Korea closer to China. Many significant influences over Korea either came from China or they came via China in the ancient time. China also enjoyed suzerainty relationship with
Korea till the Yi dynasty. In the psyche of Korean people, ancient Chinese role in the regional politics had always been seen as very significant. Notwithstanding all the influences of China, Kim Il-sung was quite aware of the overshadowing size and population of China and incessantly tried to portray North Korea as an independent actor in the international politics.

In the case of South Korea, the US and Japan virtual-alliance, it also had another aspect of their unique relations. Although, Japan and South Korea both were close allies of the US in the region, colonial experiences of South Korea did not allow making any advancement in the rapprochement between them. Japan and the US had security treaty and Japan emerged as the closest ally of the US in the region. The US and South Korea signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in the August 1954. Being part of the US security arrangement for the Northeast Asia, the relations between the South Korea and Japan has been marked by intense 'frictions to reluctant cooperation' (Cha Victor D. 1999: 10). The extent of mutual mistrust between South Korea and Japan could be understood from the fact that during the Korean War, South Korean President Rhee Syng-man publicly opined that Seoul is ready to accept defeat than getting assistance from Japan in its fight against North Korea. It took about two decades to sign a normalization treaty between the two countries. The normalization treaty between the two countries was only signed in June 1965.

The treaty was a product of American pressure to formalize the relations between the two countries and thus to smoothen the coordination problem arising from time to time in maintaining the virtual-alliance. Though, in the coming decade, South Korea and Japan economic exchanges grew, South Korea could not forget colonial atrocities perpetuated by Japan. Similarly, Japan also did not accept South Korea as an equal ally of the US in the post-Second World War order. Japan kept on looking at Korea as a 'dagger' pointed at its heart. There are still evidences that both, Japan and South Korea have not fully realized the fact that they are on the same side of the contest. For the first time in 1969, Japan and South Korea formally accepted that they had direct security links. However, Japan withdrew its statement after the
coming of a new government in power. In the early 1970s, whereas Park Chung-hee government’s economic plans and direction got influenced by Japanese model, Seoul never recognised any influence of Japan on its economic development model. On the other hand, Japan was also interested in building a closer relationship with North Korea. Japan normalized its relations with the communist China in 1972 and on the similar lines, also signed a memorandum on the trade agreements with North Korea. The bilateral trade between North Korea and Japan increased from 1971 to 1974, whereas in the same period, South Korea-Japan trade declined substantially. In the late 1970s again efforts were made by both the governments to change the direction of their relations. In 1978 and 1979, high level military exchanges were conducted between the two countries and in 1983, for the first time in the post-war era a summit meet was held between the President of South Korea Chun Doo-hwan and the Prime Minister of Japan Nakasone Yasuhiro. In another positive posture from Japan, Emperor Hirohito made a statement of regret for the colonial misdeeds of Japan in Korea in 1984. However, the relations between the two countries could be characterised as far from normal and often political leaders publicly criticized each other on various pretexts. South Korean approach was not only influenced by the historical factor but also its scepticism about the Japanese attempt to acquire more prominent defence role in the region.

The deep scepticism between the two countries could only be explained by bringing the role of norms, perceptions, historical experiences and other ideational issues into the ambit of the study. The unique relations between Japan and South Korea did not lead to making any formal alliance in the region among the US, South Korea and Japan. According to the provisions of US defence treaty with Japan and South Korea, Washington provided security umbrella to both the countries and on the pretext of North Korean and communist threat in the region and by getting inspired by
the ‘domino theory,’\textsuperscript{14} it maintained its troops in the Okinawa in Japan and at the mainland South Korea.

The US regularly talked about the withdrawal of its troop form the Korean peninsula, such as in the case of Nixon declaration to withdraw force from the region, but the US was so intricately entangled in peninsular affairs that it could not be effectively and immediately done. Being a party of the Armistice Agreement after the Korea War, they had justification to be in the peninsula. Unlike, the USSR, Washington enjoyed more influence over its regional allies and it got unconditional support from South Korea and Japan in its Northeast Asia policy goals. Unlike North Korea, Seoul did not have a China to use for getting manoeuvring space from the US.

Thus, a distinct kind of security alliance structure emerged on the Korean peninsula during the Cold War era. This regional distinctiveness was a product of historical process in which norms, identities, perceptions and other ideational factors shaped the course of events. As conceptualized by the Neorealist theory, the balance of power on the Korean peninsula was not only determined by the power structure but by the other ‘soft’ variables also, which played equally important role.

**Role of Regional Actors**

The security paradigm of the Korean peninsula, which was established in the process of consolidation of two regimes on the southern and northern part of 38th parallel, was influenced by not only behaviours of both the regimes, but was also substantially shaped by the Cold War dynamics and the role of other regional powers. In shaping the security paradigm of the peninsula, geo-politics has not been less important.

Korea has been considered to be a country which could not be overlooked or neglected by Japan, Russia and China, if they want to conceptualize their security. ‘It

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Domino Theory} was a product of the Cold War day’s conceptualization of the international relations by the United States. According to this theory, it needed to create a bulwark against the spread of communist expansion in Asia. If the US was not able to contain the communist expansion in South Vietnam, South Korea and Taiwan, like domino effect, the Soviet influence would spread in the Asia without any contest.
(Korea) is more an obstacle or nuisance for these countries than a boon' for them (Rhee T. C. 1997: 19). Since, the peninsula constitutes an important variable in the security conceptualization of these countries, they tend to meddle in the internal affairs of the peninsula. In the past, these players have tried to get a foothold in the peninsula for their strategic goals.

In the Cold War days, Korea constituted the eastern most arc of conflict between the two superpowers, which divided their influence zones according to their global strategies to dominate the world. This arc of conflict was made of some other buffer states such as Indo-China. Although, the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, did not include the peninsula in the US defence perimeter in the beginning, but soon the US realised its strategic significance. The 38th parallel emerged as a demarcation line between the US and the USSR’s strategic orbits. It could be good for both the superpowers to maintain hold over the two regimes of the peninsula but it had a painful burden on the people of Korea. Geo-strategically, Korea had to pay and has been still paying price to be ‘a country of the wrong size in the wrong place’ (Oberdorfer 1997: 7).

The two superpowers tried to maintain the influence on their respective zones of influence, as it is considered to be a significant buffer which kept them away from a direct confrontation with each other. The peninsula also got a prime position in the security matrix of the other regional powers such as China and Japan. China was more interested in peninsular politics because it had long border with North Korea and it was necessary for China to show that it had more influence and leverage over North Korean communist regime than the Soviet Union. The rift between the Soviet Union and China over being the ‘true’ socialist state also extenuated the Chinese interest in the peninsula. China always considered the peninsula as its legitimate sphere of influence. The Chinese support to North Korea in the Korean War by sending its regular army personnel, in the garb of volunteers, was very much influenced by this perception. The revival of suzerainty relations in the modern time has always been an ambition for China. The Cold War security structure on the Korean peninsula did not
get any serious challenge over a long period of time and the regional setting has always played a role in determining the security structure of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{The United States}

The role of the US in the Korean peninsula during the Cold War period has been the most crucial in constituting the security paradigm. To keep a foothold in Northeast Asia, the US realized the strategic significance of the peninsula in its cognitive map. Initially, the US policy objectives vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula was ambivalent however, with the growing intensity of the Cold War, the significance of Korea, in the US contest against the communism, was well recognized. The US interest in the peninsula was part and parcel of its overall global strategic calculus to contain communism across the globe. It wanted to establish a buffer state which would contain spread of communism in other Northeast Asian countries.

After Japanese surrender in Korea to the US and Soviet armies, various Peoples’ Committees were sporadically formed in Korea and it was obvious from the activities of these committees that they had a clear inclination towards the communist model of state building (Cumings 1981, Cumings 1990). Washington was not happy with the developments in the peninsula and perceived the emergence of these committees as an obstacle for the US interests in the region. Washington hastened the process of establishment of political authority in Korea with the help of the UN. When the US realized that it was not possible to conduct elections in the northern part of the peninsula, it pushed for an early election only in the southern part of Korea. The elections in the southern part led to the establishment of a democratic form of government and it concretized the division of the peninsula. Within a month, in northern part also, a communist state was formally created under the leadership of Kim Il-sung. From the very beginning of the two regimes in the peninsula,

\textsuperscript{15} In an informal discussion, Prof. Park Myung-lim, who has written a two-volume seminal work on the Korean War, admitted that the most important variable in conceptualization of the Korean security paradigm should be the regional set-up. He emphasized that the regional setting has been important not only during the Cold War and Post-Cold War days but it has been significant from the second half of the 19th century.
Washington tried to discourage Seoul’s rhetoric and activities of ‘March to North’ along with containing North Korean goal to ‘liberate South.’ Thus, the US, which was primarily responsible for the initial partition of Korea in 1945 (Kihl Y.W. 1990: 97), became the ‘co-container’ of the two regimes which wanted to achieve the goal of reunification by all means. Thus, the US played a decisive role in the division of the Korean peninsula but restricted both the regimes to pursue a policy of reunification by force. In the wake of North Korean initial success in the Korea War, which began on 25 June 1950, Washington intervened in the aegis of the United Nations and its troops have been present on the peninsula then onwards. The initial role of Washington in Korea, led to the establishment of an alliance partnership with South Korea. The US provided South Korea security guarantee by the treaty of 1954 between the two countries. A zero-sum game on the peninsula among the US, South Korea and North Korea became operationalized on the peninsula. The US role in the Korean politics have been central to the peninsular politics, hence it had been often regarded by the nationalist leaders of Korea as an external intervention in Korea’s internal affairs (Kihl Y.W. 1990: 97). The persistence of the US influence in South Korea affected the process of its political and economic paths in the coming decades.17

A distinct pattern of relations between both the regimes of the Korean peninsula existed, for which the US was also responsible to an extent. The peculiarity of pattern of their relationships provided limited options for the US, except supporting the South Korean regime. On a few occasions, when Washington showed some positive gesture towards Pyongyang, Seoul reacted strongly, showing the fear of abandonment. For example, when global détente period in the international relations resulted in reduced tensions between the two superpowers and even the North and South Korea relations also witnessed a thaw in their mutual hostility, the US

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16 Victor D. Cha says that during the Cold War, the US role was considered to be ‘co-container’ of two regimes of the peninsula, which changed into being ‘facilitator’ in the post-Cold War. He thinks that in the post-summit period, the role of the US is perceived to be of an ‘impeder’ in the process of rapprochement between North and South Korea (Cha Victor D. 2004b: 104).

17 Kihl Young-whan has given a detailed description about the perception of nationalist leaders of South Korea, who considered the role of the US as an impeder in the process of reunification in the peninsula (Kihl Y.W. 1984).
announcement that it might lift travel restriction to North Korea, was criticized by South Korea. In July 1972, South Korea conveyed its strong protests over the US Secretary of State, William Rogers's use of the formal designation 'DPRK' in referring to Pyongyang. Both the acts of the US were seen as an attempt to dilute its commitment to South Korea and a first step towards the US recognition of the North Korean regime (Cha Victor D. 1999, Kim Sam-o 1974, The Korean Herald, 12 March, 1972).

Whenever the US mooted any idea of withdrawal or reduction of forces from the region, it was ferociously opposed by South Korea. Thus, even during some improvements in inter-Korean relations, the US had little option but to keep a distance from North Korea. North Korea, from the very beginning, considered itself as the sole representative of the Korean people across the 38th parallel. It wanted to deal directly with the US on the pretext that the Armistice Agreement to end the Korean War was signed among North Korea, China and the US. North Korea insisted that to establish a peace regime on the peninsula, Washington should directly talk with Pyongyang and did not like Washington’s willingness to approach North Korea through South Korea. The North Korean position had to do with its legitimacy contest with South Korea. The US seemed to be comfortable in this struggle of legitimacy between the two regimes. Although, the US had security commitment to South Korea, it made it clear, time and again, to Seoul that it would not allow any military adventurism on the part of Seoul for the goal of reunification of the peninsula. Thus, in a way Washington played an explicit role in containing North Korean aggression vis-à-vis South Korea but also simultaneously it played an implicit role of restricting South Korean ambition to adopt all means, including military, to reunify Korea. There is no dearth of evidence to show that North Korea wanted to destabilize the South Korean regime and the North Korean military superiority in the initial decades after the World War II made South Korea sceptical about its own defence preparedness. South Korea, under

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18 At least three times, during Johnson, Nixon and Carter administrations, Washington contemplated to withdraw or reduce troops from the region. However, these contemplations were based on the grand foreign policy consideration rather than the needs and requirements of security restructuring for the security of South Korea.
Rhee Shyng-man and Park Chung-hee governments, was never shy about its desire to end this looming threat by reunifying the peninsula, even by force. However, the US did not allow South Korean regimes to choose an option which could entrap it in a second Korean conflict. The US administrations policy vis-à-vis Korean peninsula in the post-Cold War era has been summarized in the Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The US administrations and their policies vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Administration and Years</th>
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<td>Johnson (1963-68)</td>
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<td>Nixon (1969-73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ford (1973-75)</td>
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<td>Carter (1976-80)</td>
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<td>Reagan (1981-88)</td>
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The South Korean perception about the US was divided throughout the Cold War period and when the political control in South Korea loosened up, it became more and more pronounced.¹⁹ A large section of public opinion in South Korea perceived that the US was not sensitive enough to the Korean ‘realities’ and they were sceptical about the security commitment of Washington. The only silver line in South Korean popular perception about the US was that it was considered as a country

¹⁹ The issue of role of the US in South Korea and its linkages with democratic process has been dealt by Han Sung-joo (Han Sung-joo 1974).
which played significant role in abolishment of Japanese colonialism from Korea and provided timely intervention during the Korean War, in which thirty thousand American soldiers died and nearly 137000 wounded (Larson 2004: 11). The significance of the US nuclear umbrella for the security of South Korea was particularly important as South Korea was militarily inferior to North Korea, at least, till the mid-1970s. They considered this special relationship as 'forged in blood'20 and similar to the Chinese relationship with North Korea. Thus beyond a point, even the critiques of the US presence in South Korea did not push for an end of the US intervention in the domestic affairs of the country.

Military assistance of Washington to Seoul is also significant to comprehend the role of the US in constituting the security environment of the peninsula. According to the provisions of the security treaty between the US and South Korea, a large contingent of US troop had been stationed in South Korea during the Cold War. Rather than taking the sole burden of South Korean security, the US tried to support the development and improvement of South Korea’s armed forces by providing almost 80 percent of South Korean arms purchases and was involved in technical training of the forces. Between 1950 and 1988, the US provided South Korea over $3.5 billion as free military assistance, in addition to nearly $9 billion on the other military aid (The ROK Ministry of Defense 2002: 40). From 1945 to the beginning on 1970s alone, the US economic assistance to South Korea was around $3.8 billion, which was very crucial in the initial decades of slow economic progress in South Korea (Niksch 2002). The role of the US was also very important for South Korea as it helped in gaining legitimacy by external recognition of the country and South Korea was able to establish formal diplomatic relations with many countries and entered into various international organisations. Thus, it is difficult to discern the complex South Korean perception about the role of the US in the peninsula.

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20 This characterization comes from Roh Moo Hyun’s speech, marking the 55th anniversary of Armed Forces Day on October 1, 2003, available at the ROK Blue House website, http://www.cwd.go.kr
The US nuclear umbrella was provided to South Korea and on various occasions during the Cold War, Washington openly threatened to use these deadly weapons against North Korea.\(^{21}\) However, the US followed a policy of neither confirmation nor denial, on the issue of presence of these weapons on the peninsula for a long time. First time in July 1957, Washington openly accepted its intention to introduce such weapons to South Korea. In January 1958, the US admitted that they had actually deployed such weapons in South Korea.\(^{22}\)

**China**

China was among the two major outside powers which played very significant role in the security scenario of the Korean peninsula during the Cold War period. In the first few years of the Cold War, China was more involved in the domestic consolidation and legitimacy. However, during the Korean War, when the UN forces, under the leadership of the United States, intended to cross Yalu River, it became difficult for China to keep itself away from the developments on the peninsula. Chinese volunteers actively participated in helping the North Korean communist regime and were successful to roll back the allied forces out of North Korean territory. Finally, an Armistice Agreement was signed between North Korea, the UN command and China. The Chinese involvement in peninsular affairs became a fact to reckon with during the whole Cold War period.

Chinese involvement in the peninsula was not detached from the memories of historic relationship between Korea and China.\(^{23}\) Apart from the security stake of communist China, the old self-image of a ‘patron’ country also influenced the decision of China to commit 2.5 million combat troops as volunteers to the Korean War. It has led to an estimated loss of 1,15,000 Chinese lives and 2,21,000 wounded.

\(^{21}\) Michael Mazarr has given a detailed description of the American threats and their role in constituting the threat perception and nuclear ambition of North Korea (Mazarr 1995: 19-21).

\(^{22}\) The announcement was reported in *The New York Times* on 16 July 1957 and 29 January 1958.

\(^{23}\) China and Korea had ‘suzerainty relationship’ in history and it is significant to note that in the relations China had an upper hand in deciding the external relations of Korea. There are debates about the extent of Chinese influence on the Korean relations with the outside powers, but the relations did shape the historical epoch of struggle among various powers to have a control over Korea.
The Chinese intervention in the Korean War had less to do with Cold War communist solidarity and more with the Chinese national interest to limit the American influence in Korea.

In the years after the Korean War, China emerged as the key North Korean ally and an important player in the peninsular politics along with the Soviet Union. China intended to replace the dominant position of the Soviet Union which enjoyed goodwill of North Korea by playing the key role in installing the Kim Il-sung's leadership. For the same reason, Beijing wrote off all the war debts of Pyongyang. However, in material terms, China was not in a position to compete with Moscow and in 1976, Chinese grants and loans to North Korea totalled $967 million in comparison to $1.53 billion of the Soviet Union. By the trade agreement of 1982 and 1986, China pledged to provide 1 million tons of crude oil per annum to North Korea at a very low price.24

In military assistance also, China could not have matched the Soviet Union as it was itself dependent on the Soviet military technology till the 1980s. However, North Korea always showed a keen interest in China and looked at Beijing as an alternate source to avoid its total dependency on Moscow. China stayed in North Korea till 1958 and its involvement in the Korean War had deeper impact on North Korean psyche, coupled with cultural affinity between the two countries. Even after the withdrawal of Chinese volunteers from North Korea, Beijing supplied weaponry of the estimated value of $432 million from 1958 to 1964. However, in comparison to the Soviet Union, its record remained very low in count.25

Chinese arms assistance to Pyongyang was also dependent on ups and downs of Pyongyang-Moscow relations. In Cuban missile crisis, when North Korea issued critical statement about the role of the Soviet Union, Moscow reduced its military

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24 Chinese documents did not provide precise facts and figures, and on the low price they just referred to as a 'friendship price.'
25 The figure has been taken from the annual tables from 1972 to 1977 in World Armaments and Disarmament, the yearbook published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Stockholm, and from the annual tables from 1963 to 1975 in World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, published by the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.
assistance to Pyongyang and China arms supply increased in 1963. In early 1980s, when China realized that Pyongyang might provide a naval base to Moscow at Nampo, Beijing promptly supplied the new sophisticated indigenous weaponry to Pyongyang. The North Korean missile development programme, which has been generally based on the Soviet technology of Scud missiles, also allegedly got boost up by the Chinese solid-fuel propelled HQ-2 and could be linked to the North Korean Taepodong I missile. The competition to get a hold over North Korean regime in 1980s between China and the Soviet Union declined and consequently the Chinese military assistance also went down.

China maintained its exclusive alignment with North Korea, till the Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 and beginning of an understanding between the US and China. The subtle shift in the Chinese policy became more pronounced with the growing attention of Chinese policy makers on their domestic economic reconstruction. China launched its ‘open-door policy’ in 1978 and the Chinese economy was opened, though in a limited way, to foreign capital and investment. The economic imperatives of China, pushed it to adopt a de-facto ‘two-Korea’ policy even before the end of the Cold War and more than geopolitical considerations, these imperatives played the ‘central role’ in promoting the indirect Chinese trade with South Korea (Lee Chae-jin 1996: 70-72). In the late 1970s, China opened unofficial trade with South Korea through third-party intermediaries and their bilateral trade grew steadily from $434 million in 1984 to $3.0 billion in 1988 and $5.8 billion in 1991. China supported simultaneous entry of both the Koreas in the United Nations in 1991 and finally, established formal diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1992. It was a crucial shift in the Chinese foreign policy, however, the shift was not highlighted by either China or South Korea and the issue remained dormant till the establishment of formal relationship between two countries in 1992.

E. Japan

26 R. Bates Gill has given details about a direct proportional link between the Chinese increased military assistance to Pyongyang and its relations with Moscow (Gill 1992).
Japan’s approach towards the Korean peninsula in the Cold War era was of critical detachment and utilizing the division for its own recovery. Japan got good share in the profits from the Korean War contracts and also by the US-assisted trade access to South Korea. Basically, the ‘natural inclination’ of Japan was for a two-Korea policy than the pro-South Korea posture demanded by the US. The Japanese intention was to ‘exploit trade possibilities in both the countries and maintain enough political influence in both capitals to discourage another inter-Korean war” (Roy 1988: 1287-88). Japan has been a reluctant ‘quasi-alliance’ partner with South Korea. Many Japanese leaders including the three Liberal Democratic Party’s Prime Ministers in the first decade after the Korean War, openly intended to support for a symmetrical Japanese posture towards North and South Korea. However, the idea was vehemently opposed by the other opposition leaders and even by the other LDP leaders. Thus, Japanese policy vis-à-vis Korean peninsula during the Cold War era had been ambivalent, rather incoherent. Apart from domestic political alignments, Japanese stance depended on various other factors such as the regional political-security environment, changing North Korean postures, and more than anything else, the US policies.

Till the 1960s, Japan was involved in its own post-war reconstruction and had little interest and capability to play any significant role in the regional politics. Its relations with North Korea did not have any positive or negative impetus till then. However, Japan started taking relatively more interest in Korean affairs after the normalization treaty with South Korea in 1965. The treaty of normalization was a product of the US pressure on both South Korea and Japan to formalize their ‘fate to be in the same side of the Cold War divide’. Both the countries were reluctant to come closer to each other for various historical and pragmatic reasons. It was not easy for South Korea to leave aside the colonial experiences and popular opinion was always against any such kind of rapprochement. It was only when a military dictatorship was established in South Korea under the leadership of Park Chung-hee, that South Korea was able to sign the normalization treaty. Notwithstanding with the
colonial past, South Korea was also scared with the Japanese economic dominance and perceived that the inevitable outcome of the economic cooperation with Japan would be that the South Korean economy would become ‘an appendage of the Japanese economy’ (Hahm Pyong-choon 1964: 171).

On the other hand, Japan persistently tried to avoid military commitment to Korea as it looked at the division of the peninsula as a product of American and Soviet rivalry and thus, these two countries should bear the burden of defence of the peninsula. Japan signed the treaty of normalization with South Korea in 1965 but only in 1969, in a joint communiqué with the US, agreed that South Korea is essential to the security of Japan and it would take ‘prompt and positive’ actions in the case of any North Korean aggression at Seoul. Japan again tried to play an ambivalent role by afterwards clarification that the Japanese commitment for the ‘positive’ actions did not necessarily mean unequivocal support to South Korea in any crisis. It said that the ‘positive actions’ meant a forward looking policy in which Japan would be free to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ depending on the Japanese evaluation of the situation. In a more clear term, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshio Kimura in 1974 said that ‘the government of Republic of Korea is not the only lawful government on the Korean peninsula’ and Japan is more concerned about the ‘peace and security of the Korean peninsula in entirety, rather than the security of the Republic of Korea alone’ (The Japan Times, 31 August 1974). The Japanese ambivalent policy vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula continued during the Cold War period and in the Japanese Defense White Paper of 1979, Japan expressed dissatisfaction over the ‘conditions on the Korean peninsula’, which could threaten the peace and security of the region but did not blame North Korea directly for it.

North Korea was not happy with the normalization of Japan’s relations with South Korea. Pyongyang took a hard-line policy towards Japan and officially branded the normalization as a Japanese step towards again reaching out of its boundary. It alleged that the new developments in the relations of Japan were ‘the revival of the Japanese militarism’ (KCNA, 10 January 1966 and Masao 1989: 333). Till 1972, no
progress in the normalization of relations between North Korea and Japan seemed possible. However, after the Nixon’s visit to China and beginning of an era of limited cooperation between China and the US, North Korea softened its position and stopped direct verbal attacks on Japan. North Korea offered that it was ready to normalize relations with Japan. Moreover, it also said that the issue of compensation for the Japanese exploitation during the colonial period would not necessarily be part of any normalization treaty between the two countries. This stance was markedly different from the North Korean earlier position in which it insisted on the inclusion of ‘reparations’ in any step to normalize relations with Japan. Pyongyang also did not insist on repudiating the 1965 normalization agreement with South Korea as precondition of the normalization of relations.

The US was not happy with the growing closeness between Japan and North Korea from 1972. The two-way trade between them grew from $57 million to $250 million in the next three years. It is interesting to note that in 1975, an informal forum of the Japanese Diet members, to promote North Korea and Japan friendship, had 300 members, whereas a similar forum of South Korean supporters had only 273 members. North Korea tried to utilize the Japanese goodwill but, due to its domestic economic problem, was not able to keep pace with time. In 1977, it defaulted on $600 million debt to Japan. It led to dampening of economic relations between the two countries. In the late 1970s, South Korean economy also started growing faster than its North Korean counterpart and Japan realized that the economic cooperation with South Korea would be more fruitful for the Japanese economy.

The Japanese attitude vis-à-vis Pyongyang also changed after some terrorist incidents supposedly consented by the North Korean regime such as Rangoon bombing in 1983 and explosion of a Korean Airlines plane in 1987. In the case of overt antagonism between the North and South Korea, Japan had little diplomatic choice but to condemn these terrorist activities perpetrated by North Korea (Watanabe 1994: 13). However, Japan always wanted to see a balance between North and South Korea and worked to prevent the gap between North and South from widening too
much. It would create an unstable situation on the peninsula and which could be dangerous for Japan. For the same reason, it again started softening its attitude towards Pyongyang in 1989. It was possible for Japan to soften its attitude towards North Korea also because South Korean President Roh Tae-woo initiated the ‘Nord Politik’, which provided more flexibility to Japan in dealing with North Korea. Japan expressed ‘deep regret and repentance’ for the colonial period and sent its mission for the normalization dialogue in 1990 to Pyongyang. However, this time North Korea did not show any concession to Japan and asked for $11 billion as reparation. The normalization talks reached at an impasse because of North Korea-Japan disagreement on the amount of reparation. Japan, which paid $600 million to South Korea as reparation in 1965, was ready to pay $5 billion to North Korea but North Korea was not satisfied with it.

To get a hold in bargaining, Japan raised the issue of 11 Japanese abductees, who were abducted by North Korea for spying purposes in the mid-1980s. Japan also raised the issue of the North Korean denial to permit Japanese wives of North Korean citizens to visit Japan. However, the issue of amount of reparation was the main stumbling block in these negotiations. Japan kept itself at a safe distance from the Korean peninsula and rather than acknowledging North Korea as a threat for the regional security, maintained, without naming North Korea, that the tension and hostility on the peninsula were responsible for the instability in the region. It avoided any direct involvement in inter-Korean affairs. In essence, the role of Japan in constituting security structure on the Korean peninsula was significant during the Cold War only because it had close cooperation with the US and along with South Korea, was on the same side of the Cold War divide in the region.

The USSR

From the very beginning of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union considered the Korean peninsula as the focal point of its geo-political interests in Northeast Asia. At the Yalta Conference itself, the role of Moscow in the peninsula was recognized by the allied powers. After the surrender of Japan on August 10, the first contingent of
Soviet forces landed on the north-eastern coast of Korea. Till then, it was believed that the Soviet Union did not have any definite plan for the peninsula and Stalin was thinking in global geopolitical terms about the Soviet Union's emerging competition with the United States and his primary interest was in Europe (Yakubovsky 1996). In the wake of the Cold War, it wanted to have a foothold in the peninsula and it helped Kim Il-sung to establish a communist regime in the northern part of the peninsula. Russia looked at the North Korean communist regime as a buffer but it could not anticipate a split with China, which led to competing claims of Beijing and Moscow over Pyongyang. The significant role of Soviet Union in the establishment of the communist regime in the initial years was neutralized by the direct involvement of Chinese volunteers in the Korean War. It is still a controversial issue that to what extent Moscow was responsible for the beginning of a horrendous war on the Korean peninsula in June 1950 (Cumings 1981, Merill 1989, Park Myung-lim 1996). However, North Korea did not feel satisfied with the Soviet insistence in mid-1951 to escalate the war. Soviet concurrence in the armistice could be seen as a betrayal of the North Korean cause. North Korea was presumably dissatisfied by the lack of support it had received from the Soviet Union during the war. Moreover, Pyongyang also felt suspicious of the Moscow's hegemonic design, which unfolded in Eastern Europe and thus, it preferred to keep a safe distance from Moscow (Oh Kaongdon 2000: 153).

Even after the end of the Korean War, the basic difference between North Korea and the Soviet Union was that whereas the latter pushed for a formal involvement of North Korea in the communist block and acceptance of a division of labour, North Korea was unwilling to play a role of junior partner in the block. In 1956, North Korea refused to become member of the Communist Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Moscow was more concerned about its broader agenda to contain the American presence in the region and beyond. North Korea considered it inappropriate to fully shape its foreign and economic policies according to the demands of the Soviet Union. Pyongyang gave preference to its own heavy and machine building industries and did not oblige Moscow by shaping its economic
policies to serve the Soviet economic priorities. Distancing itself from the possible use of force by North Korea in future for reunification of Korea, Moscow made it clear in 1960 that the two regimes have emerged on the peninsula and they are based on the different social systems. Thus, the USSR proclaimed that it would be inappropriate to support reunification of the peninsula by 'enforced annexation of one part of the country by the other' (Yakubovsky 1996: 331-332).

The relative weight of Beijing over North Korea could be discerned from the fact that in case of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of 1961 with the Soviet Union, it was mentioned that the treaty needed to be re-evaluated after 25 years, in the case of China another similar treaty was valid for an indefinite period. In the first article of the treaty, the Soviet Union pledged to support in the case of armed attack on North Korea, however, by article five it qualified that the reunification of Korea should be brought about by the peaceful means (Kim Doug-joo:: 1994: 492). Even during the Pueblo Crisis, Moscow made it apparent that it was not ready to unconditionally support North Korea in all eventualities. It said that the pact would only be honoured in the case of North Korea being the victim of any large-scale unprovoked aggression (Yakubobsky 1996: 342). Moscow also criticized North Korea in the case of shooting down of a US EC-121 reconnaissance plane in 1969.

In 1962, North Korea criticized Moscow's policy as 'revisionist' during the Cuban missile crisis and it led to further deterioration of relationship between the two countries. The Soviet Union abruptly suspended its economic and military assistance to North Korea in 1962, after the criticism. Though the aid was restored in 1965 after post-Khurschev about turn in the Soviet policy, Pyongyang did not agree with the concept of 'leading party' in the international communist movement and emphasized the significance of its own policy of Juche, which was basically a policy or self-reliant development. The North Korean leader Kim II-sung did not visit Moscow from 1962 to 1984 and even when he went to Moscow, in the wake of abrogation of Beijing-Moscow Treaty of 1950 and possible positioning of Moscow for a possible
Chinese aggressiveness in the region, no joint communiqué could be issued. Moscow was not satisfied by the talks and its officials pronounced that the ‘opportunities for our cooperation with North Korea were far from being utilized’ (Yakubobsky 1996: 361). However, the visit definitely led to the restoration of goodwill again between the two countries. North Korea got sophisticated military equipments and a pledge for four nuclear reactors, which was later refused by the new Gorbachev regime. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union was trying to forge working relationship with South Korea and even at the cost of the Pyongyang’s displeasure, participated in the Seoul Olympics of 1988.

The coming of Gorbachev in power and the deteriorating economic condition of the Soviet Union further led to widening of gap in the Moscow and Pyongyang positions. In September 1990, when Moscow established formal diplomatic relations with South Korea, Pyongyang alleged Moscow for ‘selling off the dignity and honour of a socialist power and the interests and faith of an ally for $2.3 billion’ (KCNA, 5 October 1990). When Moscow declared in September 1990 that from now onwards, the trade with North Korea would be conducted on a hard currency basis, it put North Korea in an insurmountable position to pay for the millions of tons of oil and industrial products, which earlier it was getting at a preferential price (Yong Chool-ha 1994: 344).

**Inter-Korean Relations**

From the very inception, North and South Korea have been at the logger-head with each other. The two regimes claimed their juridical claim over the whole of the peninsula and considered themselves as the sole representative of the Korean people. The Korean War was also considered to be a product of their denial to mutually co-exist on the peninsula and their search for the monopoly over the whole peninsula. The hostility was predicated on the premise that there could not be two legitimate political systems in one nation. From the very inception, both the regimes were trying
to prove that the other one was not a legitimate representative of the will of the people. The basis of their contentions over the issue of legitimacy was ideology and regime performance, which reflected in welfare of the people.\textsuperscript{27} To understand the dynamics of the inter-Korean relations, it is essential to take a cognizance of their contest for the legitimacy.

The contest for the legitimacy between the two regimes of the Korean peninsula revolved around the centrality of two distinct ideologies, which have been not only different but also contradictory and incompatible to each other. Another basis of legitimacy,\textsuperscript{28} namely state performance has also been significant in the process. Depending on the domestic policy priorities and changes in the international environment, both the regimes changed the emphasis from one to another from time to time. Shortly after the formation of two states, they engaged in a brutal war for three years which helped in solidifying the power bases and legitimacy of both the states. Arguably, the Korean War also represented an ugly face of the contest between the two forces of democracy and communism. Even if, South Korea was not a truly democratic state at that point of time, and it went through a long and tumultuous process of consolidation of liberal democracy in coming decades, in its fight against the communist North Korea, it represented the forces of democracy. In the first round of the contest for the legitimacy, North Korea felt a sense of pride as it signed the Armistice Agreement with the United Nations. Notably, South Korea did not take part in the signing of the agreement. The issue has always been highlighted by North Korea as symbolic of redundancy of the South Korean regime and it became the core of North Korean claim for the legitimacy during the Cold War.

After signing of the Armistice, the political consolidation processes in the both parts of the peninsula began. The first President of South Korea, Rhee Syng-man, who was educated in America, was considered to be fit for the democratic

\textsuperscript{27}A comprehensive reference on the issue of legitimacy and state behaviour has been provided by Park Han-shik and Park Kyung-ay (Park Han-shik and Park Kyung-ay 1990).

\textsuperscript{28}North and South Koreas tried to acquire legitimacy of their system on the two basis- ideology and state performance. Depending on the situation, they emphasized on one point or the other, to prove that only their regime is legitimate government of the Korean peninsula.
institutionalization in the country. There is no doubt that Rhee consolidated a political system which was harshly anti-Communist, but he failed miserably on the front of propagation of 'true' democracy in the country. North Korea under the leadership Kim Il-sung, who had direct experience of struggle against the Japanese colonialism, opted for a communist state structure (Suh Dae-sook 1967 and Lee Chong-sik and Scalapino 1972). Since 1960s, the contest became more pronounced on the basis of regime performance. South Korea tried to harness its legitimacy by showing its economic success. North Korea campaigned in favour of its policy of sovereign and independent development under the banner of the ideology of *juche*. The contest remained unaltered throughout the Cold War and even though an Armistice was concluded, North and South Korea remained technically at war with each other, in absence of a peace treaty. The two regimes across the 38th parallel felt threatened by the very presence of each other and eschewed all mutual contacts by forcing their citizens to refrain from keeping any contact across the border. Unlike German division, people of both the parts were not allowed to write or telephone each other, forget about visiting their relatives in the other half of the peninsula. The enmity between the two states prolonged and gradually the people across the border became strangers for each other.

The contest between the two regimes was so intense that the first incident of a thaw in the inter-Korean relations could be seen only after about twenty-five years of the emergence of two state structures and two regimes on the peninsula and nineteen years after the Armistice Agreement was concluded (Krishnan 2000: 585). After secret talks between the Red Cross Societies of North and South Korea, a Joint North-South Declaration was issued on July 4, 1972. In the declaration Seoul and Pyongyang spelt out and endorsed the three fundamental principles of reunification:

1. goal of national reunification should be kept above ideologies and systems;
2. renunciation of force to resolve the reunification problem; and
3. reunification should be brought about independently, without any outside interference.

The North-South joint declaration was also linked to the emerging détente between China and the US after the Nixon’s visit to Beijing. North Korea felt a sense of abandonment by China and tried to makeover the setback by taking steps to reduce tensions on the peninsula by a rapprochement with South Korea. An equally important reason for the reconciliatory posture of South Korea could be located in its domestic political environment. In the 1971 Presidential elections, Park Chung-hee realized the sentiments for reunification was very strong and his opponent Kim Dae-jung was able to get more than 40 percent votes on the basis of his unequivocal support for the reunification. Park wanted to use this sentiment for the strengthening of his political authority (Scalapino 1976: 63). Even for North Korea, the military expansion plan, launched in the late 1962, had serious economic implications and many infiltration efforts on the part of North Korea had been far from being successful. It led North Korean leadership to rethink about its tactics to approach South Korea and unification issue (Scalapino 1976: 63). It is difficult to disaggregate the proportionality of role of changing international environment and domestic political compulsion in bringing North and South Korea on negotiating table. Looking at the further attempts by South Korea to improve relations with North Korea in 1980s and afterwards, a link between the democratisation process and the engagement policy vis-à-vis North Korea could easily be established.

The post-Korean War relations between North and South Korea could be divided into two phases. The first phase lasted till 1971 and the main characteristic of this phase was ‘confrontation without dialogue.’

29 The first time the phrase was used by Lee Hu-rak who gave a very apt description of nature of inter-Korean relations as ‘confrontation without dialogue’ till 1972 to ‘confrontation with dialogue’ afterwards. Lee Hu-rak was the head of the South Korean CIA during the 1972 agreement and he was made head of the South-North Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was created to implement the agreement arrived at by both the regimes, along with North Korean Kim Young-ju.
communication between the two regimes in this phase. It was a static phase in the inter-Korean relations. North and South Koreas kept on coming out with their respective proposals for the reunification of the peninsula, at the same time, they also kept on consolidating their positions by economic development as well as military build-up. In 1960, Kim Il-sung proposed for a broader confederation of North and South Koreas which was again repeated by the North Korean Foreign Minister, Ho Tam, in August 1970, before Nixon’s visit to China (Ho Tam 1972). North Korean position and proposals on the reunification issue has been discussed in details in the Kulloja (Kulloja: 1972: 37-47). Conversely, South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong-sik proposed a three stage programme for reunification in 1972 (Eberstadt 1995 and Roe Myong-joon 1974).

In the second phase of relationship between the two regimes after the Joint Declaration, no substantial progress could be made. Even after the agreement on the basic principles of the reunification, both the regimes were not able to make progress via either of the two channels devised for the purpose- the Red Cross Societies and the South-North Coordinating Committee. After assassination of South Korean President Park Chung-hee in October 1979, North Korea, in a new move to break the deadlock, proposed for the joint participation in the 1980 Olympics and resumption of the telephone connection between the two countries, but South Korea declined. Again in January 1980, North Korea sent a proposal to South Korea for a political conference and again South Korean government ignored the proposal. It is believed that Pyongyang’s intention behind these proposals was to take advantage of fluid and unstable political situation in South Korea after the death of Park Chung-hee. Another reason for the North Korean proposals could be the dwindling North Korean economic condition vis-à-vis South Korea (Clough 1987: 185). South Korea rejected the proposals made by North Korea, saying that these were basically North Korean propaganda. South Korea proposed an unconditional exchange visit of the leaders of both the Koreas to each other’s capital, which was predictably rejected by Pyongyang (The New York Times, 20 January 1981). Again in January 1982, South Korea put
forth another detailed proposal for the reunification (*The Korea Herald*, 23 January 1982), which was again rejected by North Korea on the ground that it was not realistic and feasible proposal for the reunification. In 1983 also, South Korea kept on asking for a high-level talk between the two states of the peninsula, but North Korean regime was adamant on its stand that it would not have any talk with Chun Doo-hwan government on the reunification issue. North Korea even sent letter to the South Korean opposition political parties and their leaders to overthrow the Chun regime and work for the reunification of the peninsula along with North Korea.

In 1984, North Korea softened its position and made another attempt to start the negotiation process with South Korea. In January, it sent letters simultaneously to the US and South Korea, proposing a tripartite talks. The format of talks consisted of the two sets of negotiations- one between North Korea and the US on a peace treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953 and the other between North Korea and South Korea on the reduction of arms and a non-aggression pact. After the resolution of these long pending issues, a Political Consultative Congress, constituted from the people from both sides of Korea would work on the modalities of the reunification (*FBIS*, 11 January 1984: D6-D11). However, it is important to note that the incident of Rangoon bombing was not forgotten by South Korea, which happened just three months before the North Korean proposal. South Korea did not agree with the proposed tripartite talks also because it did not involve South Korea in the significant negotiations on the issue related to the peace treaty. South Korea worried that this kind of talks would provide North Korea an opportunity to deal with the US directly and North Korea might flaunt it as a sign of its legitimacy. North Korea suspended all the dialogue in early 1986 in protest against the annual ‘Team Spirit’ between South Korea and the US. The inter-Korean relations again thwarted by allegedly North Korean bombing of a South Korean civilian aircraft in November 1987. Seoul was more concerned about successful hosting of the coming Olympic Games in 1988 and North Korean desperation could be linked to its frustration in the war of legitimacy.
Beyond these proposals, one real significant change came with the election of Roh Tae-woo as the President of South Korea. The new South Korean President announced his 'Nord Politik,' in July 1988, which was an important policy initiative to improve the North-South relations by expanding South Korean political, economic and cultural ties with all the socialist countries and simultaneously urging Washington and Tokyo to improve relations with Pyongyang. In the same year, South Korea began indirect trade with North Korea, which was made direct in 1990.

These growing activities symbolize growing confidence of South Korea based on its economic success and international recognition, whereas North Korean adamant posture shows its disappointment and dissatisfaction from the situation. In a two-party contest, at least one of them showed clear sign of change and these changes had more to do with South Korean political and economic confidence than the change in international environment. North Korea also positively responded to the South Korean proposals and first-ever football matches between the two countries were held in Pyongyang and Seoul in the late 1990. The next year, both the Koreas jointly took part in the two international sports events. Basically, North Korea took a cue from the Chinese and the USSR participation in the Seoul Olympics, even against the North Korean advice to them. The next landmark in the inter-Korean political relations came with the end of the Cold War at the global level and it would be discussed in the next chapter.

The Korean security structure has been greatly affected by its being heavily militarized region of the world. North Korea is one of the most militarized countries where at least 12 percent of the male population, amounting to over a million personnel in absolute terms, have been working for the military (Cumings 2004: 1-2). It is estimated that North Korea spent twenty five percent of its budget on defence.

A ‘security dilemma’ between the two countries existed from the very beginning and what one side considered helpful for its defence, was considered to be threatening by the other side. A brief survey of security capabilities of North and South Koreas portrays a spiral of arms race for the military superiority on the
peninsula. After the liberation of the peninsula from the Japanese colonialism till the Korean War, North Korea had military superiority over South Korea in accordance with its rhetoric of 'Liberate South.' In June 1950, Pyongyang's 'Korean People's Army' (KPA) maintained 1,35,000 regular army, whereas Seoul had about 98,000 military personals. The KPA also had advantage over South Korean Army (ROKA) in terms of artillery, automatic weapons, aircrafts and tanks. Training wise also, the ROKA was not at par with the KPA, as many KPA members had war experience during the guerrilla warfare in Manchuria or the Chinese Civil War. During the Korean War, both the warring states got massive help from their allies and there army strength reached around 5,10,000 (ROKA, US and others) and 7,39,000 (KPA and Chinese volunteers) respectively. In the later phase of the war, the US realized the need for ROKA expansion and intended to replace every US division by two substituting ROKA divisions (Herms 1966: 210-214). However, the US was not interested in any expansion of the air force and navy of South Korea. Based on the expansion plan, South Korean manpower by the 1953 reached at 5,91,000, which was divided in the sixteen divisions. On the other hand, the KPA strength also increased during the Korean War, but the increase was less than the ROKA. With the help of the Chinese volunteers, the KPA had enough resistance power to neutralize the growth of ROKA. In 1953, South Korean defence budget was merely $120 million but it was compensated by Washington which spent $1656 million in South Korea that year.

After the end of the Korean War, Washington put forth an estimate that South Korean defence expenditure should be around $1 billion and it wanted to reduce its support to South Korean army up to $400 million. However, the estimate could not be put into practice as South Korean economic condition was not able to bear the burden of this expenditure. Thus, a division of labour between the US and South Korea emerged in which, the former contributed capital whereas the latter supplied labour and the trend continued till the late 1970s. Within one year of the Armistice, half of

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30 A detailed description of the size of armies in the initial years of confrontation between South and North Koreas has been provided by Hamm Taik-young and Roy Applemann (Hamm 1999: 63 and Applemann 1961: 8-12).
the Chinese volunteers were withdrawn from North Korea but the number of South
Korean army reached up to 720000. According to one estimate of June 1954, if South
Korea was being attacked by the North Korean army alone, then it would prevail over
North Korea (FRUS, 1989: 1782-85). North Korea continued to build its air power
and navy after the Armistice and it received MIG-15 from China immediately after
the Armistice (FRUS, 1989: 1464). Both China and the Soviet Union gave full
support to North Korea to strengthen its air and ground capabilities. North Korea also
increased the strength of its troops to more than 400000 by 1955. However, in
comparison to massive military aid of the US to South Korea, Chinese and Soviet
assistances to North Korea were not enough and North Korea had to decrease its
military build-up in mid-1950s due to economic constraints. In the second half of the
1950s, though Chinese supplied many fighter aircrafts and light bombers to North
Korea, military aid from the Soviet Union was not up to the North Korean
expectations (SIPRI 1975: 10-12 and ACDA 1974: A11). Even after the withdrawal of
Chinese volunteers in 1958, North Korea was not in a position to expand its ground
troops. Another factor which went against North Korea was the American
confirmation that they had deployed nuclear weapons in South Korea.

North Korea waited to stabilize its economy till the beginning of 1960s and in
December 1962, announced its intention to ‘strengthen (its) defence capabilities even
though it had to delay its economic development’ (Korea Central Yearbook 1963:
157-159) and begin the policy of ‘Four Military Modernization,’ which was integrally
linked with its idea of *juche* (self-reliance). After a rift between China and the Soviet
Union, North Korea tried to pose one against another in acquiring autonomy in its
foreign policy decisions. However, for the same reason, it was not able to get
expected military and economic benefits from either of them. Not satisfied by the
slow progress in the process of military build-up in the 1950s, North Korea tried to
increase the pace in the mid-1960s. Taking lessons from Vietnam, North Korea
evolved a doctrine for not only regular warfare but also for an irregular warfare in the
second half of the 1960s. When its relations with Moscow improved in the second
half of 1960s, it acquired MIG-21, Su-7W-class submarines and other modern weapons and changed its posture from the defensive to offensive preparedness. The security scenario of the peninsula got flared up in 1968 when North Korean commando conducted a raid on the Blue House. In another incident, the US signal intelligence ship *Pueblo* was captured by North Korea.

After Nixon Doctrine in 1969 and rapid arms build-up by North Korea in late 1960s, South Korea also initiated a ‘Force Modernization Program’ in early 1970s and it expected $1.2 billion of military aid from the US for the whole programme. Moreover, South Korea also seriously considered the option to develop its own nuclear weapons in the mid-1970s (*The Washington Post*, 26 June 1975). President Jimmy Carter’s indication to pull back the American troops from the peninsula further aggravated the threat perception and sense of abandonment in South Korea (Jang Cheol-un 2005). To rectify the damage, the US again reviewed its policy and accepted in January 1979 that it had substantially underestimated capabilities of the KPA (*The US Senate 1979: 1-8*).

After coming in power of Chun Doo-hwan and revised estimate of the North Korean defence capabilities in the early 1980s, South Korea declared to substantially increase its defence expenditure. The amount of fund allocated for the Force Improvement Plan I and II were increased, however, Chun gave clear assurance to the US that South Korea would not pursue any programme of nuclear weaponisation. The South Korean steps were posited in its spectacular economic success in the last two decades. In the period, the North Korean economic constraints did not allow it to compete with South Korean defence expenditure and so it concentrated on the labour-intensive defence build-ups. Along with indigenous efforts, North Korea also tried to obtain some military equipment from the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s. North Korean desperation to counter South Korea could be gauged from the fact that it allegedly spent major portion of the Soviet aid for military purpose, though it was meant for the reconstruction of the North Korean economy. On the other hand, there was evidence that South Korea became confident about its superiority in the
conventional arms build-up vis-à-vis North Korea in the mid-1980s. Now, South Korea was more concerned about the nuclear weapons programme of North Korea, which surfaced with the revelation of the US satellite pictures in the late 1980s.

The Korean security environment during the Cold War and most notably after the end of the Cold War has been greatly affected by the issue of nuclear weapons on the peninsula from the very inception of two regimes. In the very first phase of the Korean War, the US conducted a simulated atomic bombing on Pyongyang in September 1951.31 The deadly weapons were deployed to forward positions near North Korean border in the background of US President Truman's open threat to North Korea to use atomic weapons in November 1950 (Halliday and Cumings 1988: 121-122). Public and private endorsement by various representatives of the US policy making led to a near possibility of use of these weapons in Korea during the Korean War, if it prolonged too much. Again in January 1958, Washington publicly announced that it had deployed these weapons in South Korea. These weapons remained in South Korean territory till 1991, when peninsula was 'denuclearized.' The presence of these weapons played a very important role in constituting the security consciousness of North Korea.32

South Korea was able to acquire the US assistance in its nuclear programme by the US-ROK Atomic Energy Agreement, concluded in 1956 and its first reactor was completed in 1962. From then, South Korea kept on expanding its nuclear energy programme and it is important to note that at present 40 percent of energy requirements of South Korea is fulfilled by the nuclear energy. When South Korea felt a fear of abandonment after the Guam doctrine of Nixon, it seriously considered to produce nuclear weapons from 1968 to 1976 and had a plan to purchase reprocessing plant from France (Satterwhite 1996: 28). South Korea openly threatened that it would develop its own nuclear weapon if the US would withdraw its forces from the

31 The simulation exercise was named as 'Operation Hudson Harbor' and in the exercise the fighter planes dropped dummy bombs on North Korean capital city of Pyongyang (Halliday and Cumings 1988: 163-165).
32 Bruce Cumings had explained the emergence of 'garrison state' of North Korea in this historical background of its insecurity (Cumings 2004: 1-2).
peninsula. However, the US abandoned its plan of troop withdrawal and was able to convince South Korea to leave nuclear option forever in the early 1980s. South Korea also accepted Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1975, which reduced nuclear tension on the peninsula for the time being.

In the atmosphere of ever looming threat of nuclear weapons of the US, North Korea was able to construct nuclear research reactors with the help of the Soviet Union in 1965. North Korean nuclear programme remained dormant and within the threshold limit till the late 1980s when North Korea was first time reported to be involved in weaponisation programme. During most of the Cold War period, the nuclear threat for the peninsular security did not come from North Korean side and it was only in the last phase of the Cold War rivalry, that the North Korea nuclear programme assumed unprecedented security consideration. It became so central to the security debate that the peninsular and regional efforts for any rapprochement became elusive.

**Domestic Factors**

In 1948, the election for the Supreme People’s Assembly in North Korea was held and the constitution was promulgated in the same year. The North Korean constitution also provided administrative framework for the country till 1972, after which a new constitution was framed. In the beginning, North Korea got generous help from China and the Soviet Union in building a communist state. Kim Il-sung started to consolidate his power in the late 1940s and early 1950s by sidelining various leaders inside and outside the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK). Till the beginning of the 1960s, North Korea was able to achieve domestic stability by consolidation of the Kim Il-sung regime. North Korea till that time enjoyed higher level of domestic political stability than South Korea. The economic development models of the two

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33 In the Appendix two of his book, Ha Young-sun has presented very useful chronology of South Korean major statements on nuclear weapons (Ha Young-sun 1984: 127).
states treded altogether different paths in the first decade of their formation. North Korea was working for a self-reliant economy on the socialist model, however, South Korea introduced the capitalist mode of economy by introducing foreign capital. Till the Fourth Party Congress of the KWP in September 1961, Kim Il-sung was able to fully consolidate his power. North Korea was also able to recover from the damages of the Korean War and had been able to successfully launch various campaigns for popular mobilization. Kim Il-sung was able to eliminate dissidents from the political scene (Suh Dae-sook 1988: 168-169). Kim Il-sung’s domestic consolidation led him to be offensive both at the domestic and external fronts. Another significant development was the rise of the partisans, who fought against Japan in Manchuria with Kim Il-sung. The change in the leadership led to the rise of the military. In the fifteenth plenary session of the WPK Fourth Central Committee in May 1967, Kim Il-sung purged the Kapsan faction and a monolithic ideological system was adopted. It is said that the reason behind the consolidation of Kim’s position and appointment of Ho Pong-hak as the director of the Liaison Bureau in-charge of the policy towards South Korea was to prepare for any military actions against South Korea and the US in the late 1960s. In South Korea, a military coup in May 1961 led Park Chung-hee to establish the Third Republic in 1963. After the coup, a relative stability was achieved by South Korea. However, it was clear that till the mid-1960s, stability of the Park Chung-hee regime could not be comparable with North Korea. When Seoul established relations with Japan in 1965 and decided to send South Korean troops to Vietnam, Park regime had to face strong domestic resentment. 34

In South Korea, the effectiveness of state over the population and its mobilization for economic development and military build up was not to the extent as it was in North Korea. Till then, South Korea was largely an agrarian economy and its per capita GNP was only 63 percent of North Korea. However, the South Korean economy started to perform better with the implementation of the Second Five Year Plan (1967-71) and in 1969 South Korea’s per capita GNP surpassed North Korea for

34 For example, in May 1964, the then US Ambassador to South Korea sent his report that Park Chung-hee regime might had to face serious crisis in wake of domestic opposition (FRUS 2000: 24).
the first time. North Korean economy started to slow down because of its heavy expenditure in defence and pursuance of an independent economic policy in the late 1960s. The seven year plan of North Korea, which was initiated in 1961, was not able to achieve its target and the plan period was increased for three more years until 1970. Finally in November 1970, Kim Il-sung admitted that the North Korean effort to increase its defence capability in the 1960s had been achieved at 'a very great price' (Kim Il-sung 1986: 219).’ Basically, the high defence expenditure, decreasing economic assistance from China and the USSR and poor policy management led to the failure of the seven-year plan of North Korea in 1960s. This was the time when the policy of Juche was introduced, which became the central ideology of North Korean state in coming days. It is noteworthy that North Korean ideology of Juche was based on the foundation to differentiate its political and economic structure from that of China and the USSR. With the strained relationship between China and the Soviet Union, it become essential for Pyongyang to come up with an ideology apart from the communism to keep up the morale of the people and to avoid taking side of one or another communist neighbour. Apart from the North Korean attempt to maintain ‘equidistance’ from China and the Soviet Union, the ideology also stressed on the model of self-reliant development for North Korea.

In the 1970s, North Korean political regime got further consolidated but the economic performance further deteriorated. In the Fifth Party Congress of the KWP in November 1970, North Korea declared itself as a full ‘socialist industrial state’ and asserted that it had firmly consolidated the ‘revolutionary base of the northern half of the Republic’ (Kim Il-sung 1986: 196-199). Kim Il-sung put partisan generals at the top echelon of the party. His political authority further got boost up with his appointment as the President of North Korea under the new Socialist Constitution of 1972. He officially announced his son Kim Jong-il as the one and only successor in February 1974. There was some resentment in the party on the issue of successor, but by the end of 1970s, Kim Jong-il’s position got firmly established. Gradually, the Kim Il-sung regime in North Korea became more stabilised but its economy kept on
debilitating. North Korea took one buffer year after the Six-Year Plan (1971-76) even by the end of which North Korea was not in position to repay its foreign loans (Eberstadt 1995: 21-23).

For South Korea, the 1970s was a decade of national emergence, even though Park Chung-hee regime faced domestic opposition, threat from North Korea, détente and distancing of the US from its commitment. Park Chung-hee tried to strengthen his political authority and in December 1971 declared a state of emergency. Furthermore, he declared Martial Law in October 1972 and in December 1972 adopted Yushin Constitution, which led to the quietening of domestic opposition in South Korea. South Korean authoritarian state under Park Chung-hee was able to achieve miraculous economic development after the successful completion of Third Five Year Plan (1972-76), in which emphasis was led on chemical and heavy industries. The South Korea economy grew by 50 percent between 1970 and 1975 (Eberstadt 1995: 34). Thus South Korea, which was not happy with the external developments, such as the Nixon Doctrine and global détente between the two superpowers, got its strength from the internal economic consolidation in 1970s. The issue of reunification, which was brought up in the 1972 Presidential election by Kim Dae-jung, forced Park Chung-hee to explore possibilities of a rapprochement with North Korea and which resulted in the Joint Declaration, but it proved to be a premature attempt. In the later part of the decade, the Park Chung-hee regime was more focused on the survival of his regime than the reunification. A volatile political situation erupted with the assassination of Park Chung-hee in 1979 and it could have dangerous domestic repercussion for South Korean polity and process of economic development.

However domestic political instability in South Korea did not thwarted the economic progress of the country in the 1980s and South Korean economy kept on performing at a steady pace even while political instability continued to haunt up till the emergence of Roh Tae-woo as the South Korean President. After the death of Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan took control in South Korea by a coup in the late 1979. The Chun government had to face a major crisis in the first year of its existence in
May 1980, when in Gwangju armed forces had to suppress demonstration and many opposition leaders like Kim Jong-pil, Lee Hu-rak and Kim Dae-jung were arrested. Thoughout his rule, Chun Doo-hwan was not able to acquire sufficient legitimacy. Finally in 1987, the demand for democratisation of the South Korean polity became powerful enough to oust him from power. Unlike South Korea, the North Korean domestic political condition remained stable through out this period and Kim Jong-il’s position as a designated successor to Kim Il-sung was further consolidated and formalised. In the Sixth Congress of the WPK in 1980, Kim Jong-il was elected to the Presidium of the Political Bureau and to the Central Military Commission. Kim Il-sung further wanted to strengthen his position by putting reemphasis on the issue of ideology. He initiated building the Tower of the Juche Idea and the Arch of Triumph to not only reemphasise the North Korean state ideology Juche, but also to deviate domestic attention from economic stagnation and poor performance. The North Korean economy was in bad shape with another unsuccessful Seven-Year Plan (1978-84) and after the end of the plan, no official announcement was made about the main targets of the plan like electric power, steel, nonferrous metal and chemicals (Eberstadt 1995: 23). The difference between South and North Korean economies became double in the decade.