CHAPTER 4

KOREAN SECURITY PARADIGM IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE-2

Role of Regional Actors

China:

Although the nature and context of Chinese support to North Korea has changed in the post-Cold War environment, China is generally supposed to be the key ally of North Korea, as it was during the Cold War days. The most important change which has emerged in the process is that China has shifted from its ‘one-Korea’ to a ‘two-Korea’ policy. Moreover, China has also moved away from its ideological commitment to its erstwhile communist ally and more emphasis is on the economic opportunities and benefits. Looking for trade opportunities, China adopted a new orientation thorough economic reform in 1978 by establishing SEZs on its eastern coast (Naughton 1995 and Shirk 1994). The Chinese role in the security structure of the Korean Peninsula did get affected with the changing dynamic in the post-Cold War world, but indications of these changes could be seen as early as the 1980s. Changed priorities of China during the Deng period led Beijing to reformulate its
political relations with its allies, by adopting a more pragmatic, less doctrinaire
approach to the Korean Peninsula (Oh Kongdon and Hassing 2000: 157). So the
change in the role of China in the post-Cold war had its seed in the domestic
developments and necessities of China.

The Chinese policy toward Korean Peninsula could be broadly divided in two
phases. In the first phase, which lasted till the mid-1980s, China extended total
support to North Korea under its one-Korea policy. Under the guise of volunteers,
Chinese regular military personals directly took part in the Korean War and lost many
Chinese lives. The de facto security commitment of China to North Korea was
formalized and concretized with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation,

However, gradually China reconsidered its policy of exclusive interactions
with North Korea (Lee Hee-ok 2004). South Korean economic success and the
reforms in the Chinese economy in the late 1970s led China to establish contact with
South Korea, thereby initiating a de facto two-Korea policy in the mid-1980s. In 1992,
the two-Korea policy was given de jure status with the establishment of full
diplomatic relations with South Korea (Kim Samuel S. 2001: 383). In the process, the
most remarkable thing has been that China has been able to affect a balance in its
relationship with both North and South Korea in the post-Cold War scenario. It has
been able to maintain cordial relations with North Korea while moving closer to
South Korea. Relatively diluted alliance commitment and the vast Chinese market and
cheap labour resources also provided impetus to South Korea to positively respond to
the Chinese initiatives.

China’s concerns about the North Korean ‘offensive’ posture and steps as
potentially destabilising the Korean Peninsula and the region as a whole, which could
also lead to explosion or implosion of North Korean regime, became increasingly
sharper. The US is more worried about this probability than China (Scobell 2001: 19-
20). In the beginning of the 1990s China played a critical role in persuading North
Korea to accept the UN membership simultaneously with South Korea in 1991 (Lee
Chae-jin 1996: 121-122 and Kim Samuel S. 2001: 379). However, throughout the
years of the ‘first nuclear crisis’ on the peninsula, China maintained its commitment
to North Korea, albeit with some modifications, insisting on a policy of constructive
engagement toward North Korea. At the peak of hostility during the crisis when
Washington was willing to take the issue of non-compliance of North Korea with the
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993 to the UN Security Council, China
clearly stated its intention to use its veto power (Wit et.al. 2004: 152). China was in
favour of assuaging North Korea by addressing its threat perception in a more
empathetic manner. After the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, the relationship between
North Korea and China underwent some changes. Nevertheless, Beijing remained
important for North Korea to balance the South Korea-Japan-US virtual-alliance.
China also did not join KEDO on the ground that it could play a more constructive
role outside the organization. In 1999, China actively increased communication and
exchanges with North Korea (Hart 2001: 247-259). Chinese leverage over North
Korea could also be seen in the process of the Four-Party talks which were initiated in
1996. Participation of China in the talks was considered to be the essential
precondition for bringing North Korea to the negotiation table. Beijing has tried to
take a more constructive posture regarding its involvement in the inter-Korean
interactions. It made it clear to North Korea that it could not support it militarily in all
the eventualities on the peninsula, especially if it emanated from the aggressive
behaviour and adventurism of North Korea (Henley 1997: C1 and C4).

During the Four-Party talks, on the one hand it opposed the North Korean
proposal to include North Korean-US peace treaty on the agenda and on the other
hand, it also opposed the South Korean proposal of inclusion of discussion over
tension reduction and confidence building measures (Kim Samuel S. 2001: 395). In
1998 and afterwards, in the wake of North Korean missile tests, Kumchang-ri incident
and finally visit of William Perry to Pyongyang, China again increased its political
interactions with North Korea. It probably realised these incidents as opportunities to
become more active in the Korean affairs by restructuring its close relationship with
North Korea. In April 1999, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan visited Pyongyang which was followed by North Korean Supreme People’s Assembly’s President Kim Yong-nam’s visit to Beijing in June. Finally, the Chinese leader Jiang Zemin visited North Korea in September 1999 and the friendly ties between the two countries were reiterated in the joint statement issued after the summit meet (Henley 1997: C1 and C4 and Dequan and Hanmin 2001)

Simultaneously, China also kept on encouraging South Korean sunshine policy toward North Korea and Chinese role in the summit meet between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il in June 2000. One month prior to the summit, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il visited Beijing and it is reasonable to assume that the PRC was partially instrumental in bringing Pyongyang to its historic decision.

In the second nuclear crisis, China has been the most critical player in the Six-Party talks. The talks began only after the Chinese initiative in June in a three-party preparatory talk, in which a road map for the Six-Party talks was prepared (Snyder 2003). China also provided the venue for the crucial Six-Party talks. The alliance between North Korea and China has formally continued in the post-Cold War era. However, military cooperation or linkages between the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and Korean People’s Army (KPA) does not appear to be substantial as the nature of PRC commitment to North Korean security has changed. Now, it basically consists of ceremonial, occasional reciprocal military visits and limited cooperation in the development of defence technology and weapons systems. In this new environment, even though the substantive cooperation between Chinese and North Korean military has come down drastically, yet both countries have been able to maintain a semblance of defence understanding. Chinese supply of military equipment and the scope and volume of its military assistance to North Korea have gone down from the previous decades (Hart 2001: 249 and McVadon 2001: 147)). It is also reported that China had stopped supporting the North Korean ballistic missile programme (McVadon 2001: 154). China has been also keeping itself away from any probable North Korean biological and chemical weapons development programme.
Jiang Zemin during his Washington visit in October 2002 candidly stated that China was 'completely in the dark' about the nuclear weapon programme of North Korea (The White House 2002), and that China would support any attempt for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (McVadon 2001: 273).

During the ‘second nuclear crisis’ in which China expressed its anxiety regarding developments on the Korean Peninsula, it also was critical about the US offensive and sabre-rattling which had not been helpful in the process either. In fact, Washington’s rhetoric was considered to be partially responsible for the heightening apprehensions in the North Korean behaviour (Grzelczyk 2007). China considers that direct talks between North Korea and the US are critical in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue and in establishing a security regime on the Korean Peninsula. Rather than getting bogged down by allegations and counter-allegations between the two countries, a systematic negotiation on all the critical issues was warranted. China offered its good offices in January 2003 in getting both countries to the negotiation table if both the parties were ready (Napsnet 29 January 2003). For the resolution of the nuclear issue it was able to host the Three-Party talks on April 23-25, 2003 in which the blueprint of the Six-Party talks was prepared. However, it was not clear as to how effectively China would be able to influence Pyongyang to tone down its tough posture. On the other hand China had also been trying to commence some military interactions with South Korea. From mid 1999, ministerial level visits have been exchanged on both sides. In October 2001, South Korean naval vessels visited Shanghai and in response in May 2002, Chinese PLA Navy had its first ever interaction with South Korean navy at Inchon.

In the post-Mao period, China has been working to adjust its foreign policy priorities on the basis of the changing domestic, regional and global environment. Its decision to normalize its relationship with South Korea was a product of this adjustment and balancing on the Korean Peninsula (Bang Su-ok (2004). China not only showed significant flexibility in adjusting its foreign policy to its national
interest but also at the same time adopted a two track approach by keeping its close relationship with North Korea intact. However, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War period, the relationship between the two communist allies were somewhat strained and after the death of Kim Il-sung, the foreign policy interests of China and North Korea became increasingly irreconcilable. This was reflected in reduced number of mutual visits of leaders and government officials after the death of Kim Il-sung (Kim Tae-ho 1999: 306-308). For more than a decade no summit meet between the leaders of both the countries took place as China was more concerned about improving its relations with South Korea.

By contrast, many important leaders of China and South Korea travelled to and fro. In an important visit, all the seven members of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party visited Seoul in the mid-1990s. This was an attempt by China to forge a good relationship with South Korea on the basis of mutual economic interests, transcending the Cold War divide. Even as, the process of improvement in China-South Korea relations continued, China was well aware that it could not entirely abandon its close ally North Korea. The US attempt to make Northeast Asia as one of the arenas for its Theatre Missile Development Programme (TMD) and US bombing on the Chinese embassy in Kosovo War led China to rectify the situation (Abmann 2007: 540-451). The development in the late 1990s provided impetus to the process of repairing the strained relations between China and North Korea. Chinese threat perception vis-à-vis Washington’s attempt to transgress the principle of sovereignty grew and it became more sceptical of the US-Japan and the US-South Korea alliances in Asia.

In April 1999, the Chinese Foreign Minister visited Pyongyang on a five-day visit and the process of re-strengthening of ties began between North Korea and China. In a return visit, a fifty-member North Korean delegation led by Kim Yong-nam, President of Supreme People’s Assembly visited Beijing. It was a recognition by both the countries that the US dominance in Asia posed a greater threat to their interests and therefore cooperation with each other would be beneficial for both of them.
During Kim Jong-il’s first visit to China in May 2000, both countries declared that there was ‘consensus of views on all the matters discussed’ (KCNA, 1 June 2000). Fresh efforts to reach out to North Korea were not perceived by China as a zero-sum game. As discussed earlier, the PRC focussed on strengthening its relationship with North Korea and simultaneously consolidate its relationship with South Korea. Thus, even as Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian visited Pyongyang in October 2000 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Korean War, a civilian delegation from China visited Seoul to deepen ties.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin went to Pyongyang in September 2001 after almost a decade and it constituted another significant Chinese move to repair and reformulate its relations with Pyongyang which was troubled from 1994 to 1998. Although, North Korea was interested in reviving its close cooperation with China, it also wanted to retain its autonomy in foreign policy decisions. One day before the Chinese President’s visit to Pyongyang, it announced that the inter-Korean talks, which were stalled for more than a year could be resumed soon. By this announcement, North Korea wanted to underline the fact that its foreign policy decisions were taken without any external pressure or influence. It led to lack of any common trilateral understanding among North Korea, Russia and China to deal with the US presence in the region. In the summit meet of Putin and Kim Jong-il in August 2001, there were attempts at reaching an understanding but the Chinese President made it clear in his Pyongyang visit that China would not be part of any such understanding (Wilson 2004: 179).

The nuclear programme of North Korea had to some extent pushed China away from Pyongyang. Beijing is attracted by the economic opportunities in South Korea and had forged closer ties it. Thus, in the post-Cold War environment, the role of China has been cautious vis-à-vis both regimes, and to a great extent has been able to emerge as an ‘honest broker’ in inter-Korean affairs. In the Six-Party talks, Chinese role became more significant in persuading North Korea and the US to reach a consensus in resolving the nuclear issue.
Japan

Japanese policy towards the Korean Peninsula also got affected in the 1990s due to the end of the Cold War and the changing postures of the regional players. Earlier the Japanese alliance with the US did not permit it to play an autonomous role in peninsular affairs and Japan had to willingly or otherwise go along with the US. It maintained a certain degree of aloofness from Korean affairs and the US security umbrella enabled it to maintain this posture (Calder 2003: 606-607). However, in the post Cold War period, the US announced another significant troop reduction in East Asia,¹ which made Japan directly responsible for any upheaval on the peninsula. In the changed situation Japan could no longer maintain an aloof stand with regard to developments at the peninsula. Japan was also keenly watching the growing relations between Russia and South Korea, which resulted in the establishment of a formal diplomatic relationship in 1990. It raised possibility for normalization of South Korean relations with China also which eventually materialised in 1992.

The process was also complicated with the emergence of the issue of the clandestine North Korean nuclear weapons programme in the late 1980s. Japan had to reckon with this new development in its vicinity which had the potential to jeopardize the current balance of power in Asia and could be a destabilizing factor not only for Japan but for the entire East Asian region. Thus it seemed to be pertinent for Japan to be prepared for the two extreme possibilities of another inter-Korean war and reunification of the peninsula which would have political, security as well as economic implications for Japan.² Japan was also worried about China’s rising influence in the region (Malik 2000 and Roy 1996).

¹ According to East Asian Strategic Initiative (EASI) of April 1990, the US announced its troop reduction in East Asia in two phases. In the first phase (1990-92), 4,800 troops from Japan, 7000 troops from South Korea and nearly 15000 troops from Philippines were withdrawn, bringing down the US force level in these states to 83,640 from 1,09,200. In the second phase (1992-95), further reduction was postulated however the second phase could not be implemented due to changing regional dynamics and coming of a Democrat government in power.

² Some scholars view the Japanese and North Korean decisions to participate in normalisation talks primarily as a product of domestic developments in both the countries (Kim Young C. 2005).
In the above scenario Japan took the first step and embarked on normalization of its relations with North Korea. In the initial negotiations, the main hurdle in the normalisation of their relations was the issue of release of Japanese crew members of Fujisan Maru, even though apparently, both the parties were interested in the issue of normalisation (Kim Young C. 2004: 139). Under the pretext of this effort, Japan lifted some sanctions from North Korea. But the initiative was also meant to gauge North Korean mood about future normalization talks, in the post-Cold War world. In a statement on 20 January 1989 ‘About Our Policy toward North Korea’ Japanese Prime Minister Noburo Takeshita officially expressed regret over the atrocities committed by Japan during the colonial period. Later, Kanemaru Shin led Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Japan Socialist Party (JSP) members visited North Korea in September 1990. The joint statement issued after the visit heralded a new beginning in the Japan-North Korea relations. They discussed the goal of reunification of Korean Peninsula and abrogation of nuclear threats. This sharp change in Japanese posture was able to release Fujisan Maru’s crew and resulted in beginning of normalization talks in November 1990.

Rather than strengthening the Japanese position in the peninsular politics, the move was looked at with suspicion by South Korea and the US. In November 1991, the US gave Japan information on North Korea’s processing facilities for nuclear materials and advised caution in dealing with it (Ashahi Shinbun, 29 November 2001). It was believed that Japan wanted to ‘buy’ the normalization of relations with North Korea and South Korea felt that by helping North Korea to come out of its difficult situation, Japan was interested in perpetuating the division of Korea. North Korea also wanted to have a hefty amount as compensation which could be useful in the case of decreasing assistance from Russia and China and also in the event that they might be refused US aid. Ultimately, the Japan’s move to forge good relations with North Korea could not succeed since it clearly misjudged the political mood on the

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3 The Japanese freighter vessel Fujisan Maru No. 18 was captured with all its crew members at North Korea's Nampo port by North Korea in November 1983. All the crew members were detained in North Korea on suspicion of espionage.
peninsula. Furthermore, the euphoria following the end of the Cold War had temporarily sidetracked from the threats from the North Korean nuclear weapons programme (Bermudez Jr. 2001: 276 and Manosevitz 2003: 8).

The Japanese initiative was not only predicated on the systemic change- the end of Cold War-but equally on the domestic politics of Japan. The visit of the delegates of LDP and JSP had also stemmed from the internal political rivalry among these parties (Kim Young C. 2005: 144). Moreover, another notable factor which compelled Japan’s demarche toward North Korea was the ‘Special Declaration of 1988’ of South Korean President Roh Tae-woo. The declaration was part of President Roh’s Nord Politik. These factors along with the realization of the imminent threat posed by the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of North Korea, made Japan proceed with its normalization talks with North Korea.

In the initial years of the post-Cold War period, North Korea was more interested in gaining military superiority over South Korea by alleged nuclear and ballistic missile programmes (Mazarr 1995: 15-340. In May 1993, North Korea test launched Rodong I into the East Sea. It alarmed Japan about the security of its southern cities like Osaka (Bennet 2000: 204). Japan’s initial scepticisms about South Korean growing economic might were overshadowed by the nuclear threat from North Korea. Thus, even though normalization talks continued intermittently, the North Korean threat pushed Japan and South Korea relatively closer to each other, Japan realized the limitation of its efforts to forge a new relationship with North Korea. It became more considerate about the sentiment of the South Korean people, in their efforts regarding inter-Korean affairs.

In many ways, Japan had a difficult task to play an active role in inter-Korean affairs given the alarming situation emanating from the North Korean posture and at

4 In April 1994, South Korean Minister of National Defence Lee Byong-tae and the Director General of Japan Defense Agency Kazuo Aichi agreed to establish annual, working level defence policy meetings between the two countries. It was a significant development between the political-military relations of the two countries as it set in motion regular consultations on border security concerns. For the significance of the agreement, see (Japan Defense Agency 1996).
the same time, to avoid a perception of undue intervention in the inter-Korean affairs. Thus, Japan tried to play a proactive yet not a leading role. Japan tried to balance a proactive role with a low profile during the resolution of the first nuclear crisis on the peninsula in 1994 and subsequently in providing economic and political incentives to North Korea to dismantle its plutonium based nuclear weapons programme and to moderate its behaviour. In 1999, its diplomacy became embedded in the trilateral policy coordination mechanism associated with the ‘Perry Process.’ Japan readily participated in KEDO and consented to cooperate in the process. However, Japan had to reconsider its decision when Pyongyang test-fired a satellite which was considered at that time to be Taepodong I over Japan in late August 1998. This test produced a major psychological impact on the Japanese psyche since it rendered all the cities of Japan vulnerable to North Korean missile attack possibly armed with WMD. Japan tried to acquire spy satellites for the first time and in March 1999, reportedly Japan even considered a pre-emptive strike on North Korean nuclear installations in case of any missile attack over Japan (Kang C.S. Eliot 2004: 114). Japan also decided to get mid-air refuelling aircraft to counter long-range missile strikes. Japan decided that it would cease its involvement with KEDO and also suspend its effort to normalize relations with North Korea. But after persuasion from Seoul and Washington, Japan was again brought back in the Perry process. At this point, South Korea under the leadership of Kim Dae-jung had been trying to engage North Korea by its sunshine policy. US President Bill Clinton had also been moving in the same direction and it was obvious that Japanese annoyance would not be sustained for a long time. There was no question of moving away from the US since in case of any contingency on the Korean Peninsula, it could depend on its alliance with Washington. Thus, Japan did not raise any objection to the Theatre Missile Development (TMD) programme of the US. Earlier Japan had some doubt over the technical viability of the project but after reassessing its position, it made significant financial commitment to the project. In the same year in May 1999, a Japan-US hotline communication was established to make coordination smooth. In August 1999, a joint naval ‘search and rescue exercise’- the first ever of its kind, was conducted by Japan, South Korea and the US. The exercise
was also intended to send a clear warning to North Korea against a proposed testing of the *Taepodong II* missile.

As mentioned earlier, to deal with North Korea in a more coordinated manner by Japan, South Korea and the US set up a trilateral mechanism in April 1999, known as the Trilateral Coordinating Group (TCOG). Many scholars anticipated positive role of the coordination group (Cossa 1999, Schoff 2000 and The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis 2003). Earlier Japan was dealing with North Korea without adequate consultations with South Korea and the US, which led to come back of coordination. Japan realized that as part of Japan-South Korea-US virtual-alliance, it would not be beneficial to abandon its alliance identity of the Cold War period. After this realization it began to produce a coordinated policy vis-à-vis North Korea which has been quite effective. In September 1999, when North Korea was planning to launch another ballistic missile on the occasion of the fifty-first anniversary of the regime, a unified stance from the TCOG was able to put pressure on North Korea to refrain from the test. In a summit meet among the three countries led by Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and US President Bill Clinton in Auckland, New Zealand, it was collectively agreed that if North Korea would go for this missile testing all the three would penalize it accordingly (Shenon 1999). This solidarity was also instrumental in the Berlin agreement on 13 September 1999, by which North Korea promised not to test long range ballistic missiles if it was provided with economic assistance by these countries (*KCNA*, 24 September 1999). North Korea realized that it would gain more from the cooperation than confronting them.

In the above context, Japan considered the resumption of normalization talks with North Korea in 2000. In contrast to the earlier attempt, on this occasion, it had explicit support from South Korea. It is important to note that this attempt was based on the understanding that a total transformation in the dynamic of Northeast Asian security is not possible and Japan could not transcend the historical fact of being an ally of the US during the Cold War days and also subsequently. With this realization,
the Japanese attempt to normalize relations with North Korea has been more or less steady, even though the second nuclear crisis on the peninsula aggravated the threat perception of Japan vis-à-vis North Korea. Although, South Korea under the leadership of new President Roh Moo-hyun, after his election in 2003, continued with its policy of engagement with Pyongyang, the new Republican government in the US was not favourably inclined to an engagement policy towards a communist and dictatorial regime which was seen as ‘tottering towards demise’ (Eberstadt 1999). President George W. Bush took a tough posture from the very commencement of his term in office in 2002. The new administration perceived the Nuclear Accord of 1994 as success of North Korea in forcing the US and others (Laney and Shaplen 2003). It prefers to leave a ‘tottering regime’ than helping it to again emerge as a serious threat to the security of not only the Korean Peninsula but for the entire Northeast Asian region (Paik Hak-soon 2003).

Undeterred by the changed policy preference of the new Republican government of the US, Japan kept its policy of engagement which resulted in a historic summit meet between Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang on 17 September 2002. Japan did not have sufficient consultations with the US while preparing for the Koizumi’s visit. Moreover, the US Assistant Secretary of State, James Kelly, provided Japan evidence of North Korean uranium enrichment programme in his visit to Japan to dissuade Koizumi to visit Pyongyang (Cumings 2004: 88-89). However, Koizumi went ahead with his scheduled visit.

However it is important to note that in the summit, apart from some bilateral issues, Japan raised precisely those issues related to the common agenda which were aired and weighed in various TCOG meetings, like nuclear and missile issues and development in the inter-Korean dialogue (Chon Shi-yong 1995, Shin yong-bae 1999, Cossa 1999). During Koizumi’s visit, another unprecedented incident occurred when North Korean leader Kim Jong Il openly admitted to the incident of the kidnapping of Japanese for spying purposes and apologized to Koizumi. What is of greater
significance is that in October 2002, North Korea allegedly acknowledged that it possessed enriched uranium. Koizumi’s visit and its contribution to a possible improvement in the bilateral relations between Japan and North Korea got neutralised by the revelation of North Korean uranium enrichment programme. However, Japan continued to give preference to the policy of engagement over confrontation or entrapment of North Korea. Along with South Korea, Japan did not support any punitive approach toward Pyongyang as its WMD programme could be dangerous for the security of Japan. Japan shared same sense of vulnerability with South Korea by these weapons and was concerned with any provocative steps on the part of North Korea and even the US (Kim Suk-hi 2003: 165 and US-North Korea: Political and Economic Cooperation Handbook 2008: 71), Thus, Japan played a significant coordinating role in the TCOG between the US and South Korean policy objectives.

To defuse the 'second nuclear crisis' Japan played a constructive, though not very significant role and finally with the Chinese initiative for the Six-Party talks, North Korea was once again brought back to the negotiation table in August 2003. In the initial phase of the Six-Party talks, Japan showed its willingness to provide all kinds of economic and political support to North Korea and its policy was quite close to South Korean engagement efforts (The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003). A tougher policy by Washington to deal with North Korea was neither being supported by Japan nor South Korea and the Bush administration’s coercive policy toward North Korea would have distanced it from its closest allies in the region-Japan and South Korea. So, the US had showed some flexibility in dealing with Pyongyang and the multilateral talks continued. In the fourth round of Six-Party talks, Washington provided verbal commitment to North Korea for 'non aggression' (The US Department of State 19 September 2005).

Japanese policy towards North Korea underwent another shift after the North Korean missile and nuclear test in 2006. Japan went along with the US and initiated
resolutions at the UN Security Council for punitive actions on North Korea. The changed Japanese posture, though, brought it closer to the US, distancing it from the South Korean engagement policy. From the above description it becomes clear that while Japan has shown its willingness to normalise its relations with North Korea in the post-Cold War period, it is unable to abandon its post-World War II ally- the US. Japanese role in Korean affairs has been secondary because it has attempted by and large to coordinate with the US policy rather than taking independent posture regarding North Korea. Its role has been further curtailed as it has not been able to forge a close understanding with South Korea. Issues of colonial atrocities because of visits of successive Japanese Prime Ministers to Yasukuni Shrine and Japanese claim over the Dokdo Islands keep on recurring as damper in its relationship with South Korea (Sheen Seongho 2006: 120-127).

Historical and Cold War legacies have proved far more tenacious and deep seated and the ‘soft issues’ such as historical memory or identity do not allow Tokyo to move beyond a point. Thus, Japanese limitations could be better understood within the framework of the Constructivist approach in international relations theory. The end of the Cold War was reflected in Japanese active steps to normalize its relations with North Korea, however, Japan has not been able to sustain the momentum. Finally, Japan seems to be caught in a dilemma between utilising opportunities brought about by the end of the Cold War and being committed to its Cold War alliance with the US and being part of the US-South Korea-Japan virtual-alliance.

Russia

The role of Russia as the successor state to the erstwhile USSR, in constituting the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula was most directly affected with the end of the Cold War compared to the other regional powers. The foreign policy of Russia became more inward looking and westward oriented in order to stabilise its economy.
which was drastically affected. The significance of North Korea in the foreign policy of Russia decreased as Russia became more concerned about the negative impact of its alliance with Pyongyang.\(^6\) Russian attempt to distance itself from North Korea started in the late 1980s when it asked for cash payment of its petroleum exports which was earlier provided on a concessionary basis. Though in his first speech about the Soviet policy in Asia, Mikhail Gorbachev supported the North Korean proposal of establishing a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Korean Peninsula, his government thought from the beginning that supporting North Korea within the broad rubric of ideology had been detrimental to the economic interests of the country. Gorbachev believed that the alliance with North Korea in Northeast Asia had been the primary reason for the persisting tensions between the USSR and the US, besides restricting Moscow's diplomatic options vis-à-vis South Korea. North Korean economic stagnation and its desire to acquire military superiority over South Korea by working on its nuclear programme were severely affected by the Soviet decision to ask cash payment for its fuel supply to North Korea.

By 1987, the USSR clearly started shifting the importance of ideology in its foreign policy priorities, thus restructuring its relationship with North Korea and China (Wishnick 2001, Han Jeong-suk et al. 2000). The change in the USSR policy could be attributed more to the domestic conditions and compulsions within the Soviet system than the external environment. In Gorbachev's assessment, interacting with South Korea would be more profitable than sticking to the ideological dogma of communism and assisting the North Korean regime which had not shown sufficient amenability in hours of need (Rosenthal 1990). Pyongyang-Moscow relationship became strained as a consequence of this 'new thinking' on the part of the USSR, which culminated in the establishment of ties with not only South Korea but also with Japan (Bazhanov 2003: 3). In September 1988, the USSR participated in the Olympic Games held in Seoul and at the same time it made a statement about the possibility of

\(^6\) Various experts on the Korean issue thought that the national interests of the Soviet Union had been somewhat secondary in its dealing with North Korea and the end of the Cold War provided an opportunity to rectify this anomaly in foreign policy (Denisov 1997).
pursuing economic relations with South Korea on the ground that Seoul’s posture in Korea affairs has ‘quite a number of rational elements’ (Bazhanov 2003: 4). Finally, in disregard of North Korean objections, the USSR fully normalised its relationship with South Korea in September 1990. North Korean fear of abandonment came to be true and it reacted with strong words on the changing posture of the USSR and it branded the normalisation as ‘disgusting, nauseating and unseemly’ (Bazhanov and Bazhanov 1994: 792). The USSR portrayed the developments as a product of its own domestic compulsions and North Korean ‘irresponsible’ behaviour. Moscow became a low profile player in the conflict resolution on the Korean Peninsula (Bulichev and Kulkin 2000: 26). It attempted some damage control by putting a moratorium over North Korean payment for oil delivery and in April 1991 limited the expansion of bilateral trade as also withheld some other concessions in North Korean repayment of its debts to the USSR (Ziegler 1993: 123).

Hence, even before the disintegration of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, Soviet policy vis-à-vis North Korea took a new turn and North Korea became sceptical about Moscow’s commitment to the 1961 Soviet-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. North Korean acceptance of the simultaneous entry of Pyongyang and Seoul to the United Nations in September 1991 was also a result of changing dynamics of the USSR and North Korea relations. North Korea realised that it could not rely on the USSR which during the Cold War days supported North Korea on various issues in the UN.

After the collapse of the USSR and the Communist Party role, both countries became more distanced from each other. The new non-communist government under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin tried in all possible ways to establish good relationship with the US, European countries, Japan and South Korea. More than Boris Yeltsin, Andrei Kozyrev who was the Foreign Minister of Russia was responsible for neglecting North Korea in the foreign policy priorities of early 1990s. However, Russia also tried to set limits on its pro-western policy from the early 1992 by identifying its national interests on key foreign policy issues (Bulichev 2000: 7).
Earlier in his official declaration President Boris Yeltsin characterised Western countries as Moscow’s ‘natural allies.’ The slight change in Russian behaviour could be attributed to its failure to come to a mutually acceptable solution of its island disputes with Japan. In mid-1992, Boris Yeltsin visited Beijing to gauge the possibility of a new relationship with long estranged communist countries.

In an attempt to establish good relations with South Korea, Russia after the normalisation of its relations with Seoul, candidly admitted to South Korea that ‘the Soviet-North Korean Treaty of 1961 was only on paper’. The statement was given by Russian President Boris Yeltsin (Bazhanov 2003: 9). It not only agreed to provide documents related to the Korean War but also pledged to stop military aid to North Korea (Rubinstein 1997: 164). North Korea felt threatened by these moves and blamed Moscow for breaching the trust of an old ally for meagre economic benefits (Bazhanov and Bazhanov 1994: 793). Now, it became necessary for Russia to clarify all doubts related to the 1961 treaty and in January 1993, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy F. Kunadze visited Pyongyang to make the requisite changes in the provisions of the treaty. In the negotiations about the future of the treaty, Russia made it clear that it could not continue to support the mutual defence clause which obliged Russia to help Pyongyang militarily in case of any defence threat. Russia was ready to continue the same treaty without the mutual defence clause. However, Moscow offered to prepare the text of a new treaty with North Korea to replace the treaty of 1961 and allowed the old treaty to expire in September 1996. On the other hand, Russia’s relations with South Korea grew at a steady pace. In June 1994, South Korean President Kim Young Sam visited Moscow. First time, Russia and South Korea started to work in tandem with each other. Russia pledged to support South Korea in its attempt to get non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council for

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7 Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in January 1992 stated that Russia’s future lay in close cooperation with liberal western countries than carrying forward burdensome relationships with the communist world. In the annual review of its foreign policy, Russia gave priority to the US and western European countries over its erstwhile communist allies (Kozyrev 1992).

8 The treaty was to be renewed after every twenty-five years and if not done so it would automatically become null and void after the period. It is pertinent to remember that North Korea had a similar treaty with China in the same year but unlike its treaty with the Soviet Union, there was no renewal clause.
1996-97 and South Korea agreed to support Russian case of getting membership in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It was a very significant development in the South Korea-Russia relations.

Nevertheless, Russia was not satisfied with the economic benefits out of its relationship with South Korea. Moscow was also not able to repay the South Korean loans of $1.8 billion taken in 1990. It led to an uncomfortable situation in economic ties between Moscow and Seoul. To repay its economic obligation, Russia agreed in August 1994 to supply military equipment to South Korea, but this further deteriorated the credibility of Russian intentions, in Pyongyang. The trade between Russia and North Korea declined from $2350 million in 1990 to $140 million in 1994 and came down to only $65 million in 1998 (KOTRA). Along with decline in trade volume, Russia stopped supply of military equipment to North Korea, and scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries was also severely affected. In the early 1990s, Pyongyang was also not able to pay its outstanding debts of about four billion Roubles to Russia mainly due to its own economic crisis. North Korea was also concerned about the Russian attempts to forge closer ties with South Korea (Tkachenko 1999: 29). To restore the situation and reassure North Korea, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Panove visited North Korea in September 1994. Apart from repairing economic ties with North Korea, the purpose of this visit was also to explain Russian position on the 1961 treaty, which Russia wanted to bring to a conclusion formally (Rubinstein 1997: 168). Other factors were also responsible for this visit such as Russian dissatisfaction with the non-materialisation of expected economic benefits from the western countries, moves to further expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a change in the domestic public opinion on Yeltsin’s pro-West foreign policy. After the appointment of Evgeni Primakov in

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9 Russia became full member of APEC in 1998 and South Korea and Japan both supported Russian claim to get into this elite club.
10 Russia offered to supply T-80 tanks, BMPP-3 infantry fighting vehicles, antitank and antiaircraft missiles systems and KA-32 helicopter (Kozyrev 2001: A3).
11 In the 1995 parliamentary elections in Russia the communist performance improved substantially and the main election plank of the communists was criticism of blindly looking for help from the western countries and the US for economic recovery by the present Yeltsin government. They stated
January 1996 as the new Foreign Minister of Russia, Moscow’s tilt towards South Korea was reviewed and a balance between North and South Korea was sought to be established. After the visit of Deputy Foreign Minister Vitali Ignatenko to North Korea, the economic and political relationship with North Korea was revived and Moscow agreed to provide food aid to famine affected North Korea.

However, the real shift in Russian policy towards North Korea began with the coming of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000. North Korea was ready to cooperate with the new government and was positive in dealing with Putin. Russia, after almost a decade of its distancing policy from North Korea, had realised like China that historical alliances mattered and if Moscow had to regain its sphere of influence in the region, it had to re-establish good relations with Pyongyang. Russia had not been included in the unsuccessful Four Party talks in 1997-98 to replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953 by a peace treaty on the peninsula. Buoyed by relative domestic economic stability, Moscow was eager to play a more active role in the emerging security architecture of the region (Titarenko 2002: 46). Russia realised that to play a greater role in Northeast Asia, its relationship with North Korea was significant and this new approach became quite obvious when Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov visited Pyongyang on February 20, just two months after the coming of Putin government in power. Russia and North Korea finally signed a new treaty to replace the 1961 treaty during the foreign minister’s visit (Hong Wan-seok 2001, Joo Seung-ho 2001). President Putin also visited Pyongyang in July 2000 in which both countries issued a joint declaration outlining their shared interests. It led to full normalisation of the relationship, except defence commitment to each other which had been forged during the Cold War days. To further strengthen the relationship, Russia agreed in April 2001 to upgrade the North Korean weapons supplied during the Soviet era and resumed military cooperation between the two countries. North Korea reportedly requested new weapons system worth $500 millions but Moscow refused the request that rather than reflexive support to west, Russia should try to promote its national interests in a manner which would be in consonance with Russia being a Eurasian power (Lo 2002).

12 North Korea wanted to get five hundred million dollar worth new weapons system but Russia refused to provide new weapons system (Takeda 2006)
on the ground that North Korea did not have ability to pay for these weapons in hard cash (Chosun Ilbo, 29 April 2001). North Korea began purchasing about $10 million worth spare parts annually to repair Soviet-supplied old weapons (Blagov 2002a).

In August 2002, Kim Jong-il visited Russia by taking the long rail-route through Siberia and reportedly Russia pledged to help North Korea in dealing with its energy requirements by build a nuclear reactor (Blagov 2002b). In the Moscow declaration which was signed after the summit, the North Korean position on various issues like its energy requirements, missile controversy and presence of American troops on the Korean Peninsula was clarified and endorsed by Russia. Many of these were directly included in the joint declaration. Russia once again emerged as North Korea’s alternative route to the outer world and North Korea appears to have regained its old ally of the Cold War days. South Korea under President Kim Dae-jung had been also pursuing sunshine policy to engage North Korea and it supported Putin’s active diplomacy in the region. These developments seemed to be of some significance in moderating North Korea’s tough stance. Putin revealed that in his summit meet of July 2000 North Korea wanted to get rocket booster technology and assistance in peaceful space research to fully abandon its Taepodong missile programme. It would have been a significant achievement which would have led to no justification for the US TMD/NMD programme in the region (Yang Seung-ham et.al. 2004: 804). However, North Korea soon denied the fact that it proposed any kind of deal on its missile programme (KCNA, 27 July 2000). Meanwhile, Russia-South Korea relations also got a boost with a summit meet between Kim Dae-jung and Vladimir Putin in February 2001. The most striking fact of this summit meet was that both countries expressed their serious reservation about the TMD programme in the joint communiqué. South Korea was ready to cooperate with Russia on economic and political front but it was not happy with resumption of military ties between Russia and North Korea. South Korea cautioned Russia against its military cooperation with Pyongyang in September 2001 as it could cause tension in North-South relations as well as Russia- South Korea growing ties (Yonhap, 6 September 2001).
In October 2002, the US alleged that North Korea had enriched weapons grade uranium. Russian approach to the issue was one of caution and it launched diplomatic efforts to play down the issue and arrive at a peaceful solution to the crisis. Russia opposed the move to bring the issue to the UN Security Council and during their summit meet, Putin and Koizumi discussed the North Korean nuclear issue. Russia along with Japan came out with a declaration to address the issue in a peaceful manner and emphasised their resolve to make the peninsula nuclear free. Russia along with Japan and China supported a resolution of the issue through political and diplomatic means.

On the other hand, Russia was also trying to play a more active role in the inter-Korean peace negotiations. In summer 2002, after almost two years of stalemate in the inter-Korean talks, Russia offered Seoul to host a meeting of North and South Korean leaders in Khabarovsk, to which South Korea did not respond. South Korea was expecting the next summit meet between the North and South Korean leaders to be held in South Korea. However, in January 2003, South Korea formally asked Russia to use its influence with North Korea to restrain the latter from walking out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (Yonhap, 11 January 2003). In the early 2003, the role of China and Russia became very important in North Korean nuclear issue and its resolution. Both the 'allies' of North Korea came up with separate plans to diffuse the tension over the issue. In January 2003, Russia proposed that the US

13 Russia sent Vice Foreign Minister Alexandre Losyukov as special envoy with a personal letter from President Vladimir Putin to Pyongyang when North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT on 10 January 2003. Russia wanted to play the role of mediator by resolving the North Korean nuclear issue in a peaceful and mutually acceptable manner (Yang Seung-ham et.al. 2004).

14 After the summit meet between the two leaders of North and South Koreas in June 2000, South Korea had formally invited Kim Jong-il to visit Seoul and had the next summit meet. However, North Korea did not make any comment on the invitation. Given the positive nature of the meeting, it appeared that possibly, North Korea would give its consent for the next meet and it was reported that Kim Jong-il could visit Seoul for three days from February 21, 2001 (The International Herald Tribune, 14 February 2001).
provide a security pledge guaranteeing a nuclear free Korean Peninsula and economic and food aid to North Korea (Agence France Presse, 6 January 2003).

Similarly, China was also interested in an amicable resolution of the issue and in April 2003, hosted the Three-Party preparatory talks to resolve the issue. The Chinese initiative finally outmanoeuvred the Russian proposal and the Six-Party talks began in August 2003 in Beijing. China was able to establish that it had greater leverage vis-à-vis North Korea than Russia. Moscow felt satisfied as it was being included in the Six-Party talks. By implication, it was still an important player in regional security and political dynamics. Russia had been able to underline its presence by pursuing a balanced policy vis-à-vis North and South Korea. In the post-Cold War era, it had not abandoned its old ally North Korea and yet had been able to forge good working economic and political ties with South Korea as well. Russia also proposed a trilateral economic cooperation mechanism between Moscow, Seoul and Pyongyang in the July meet between Pyongyang and Moscow (Vorontsov 2002: 52). It understood that South Korea was important for trade and economic recovery for Russia and at the same time, for political and diplomatic reasons, it should not abandon North Korea.

Sometimes the balancing caused scepticism in Pyongyang such as the South Korean agreement with Russia to convert around 30 percent of the Soviet debts into the military equipment supply to Seoul.\(15\) North Korea has always opposed Russian arms supply to Seoul as it would exacerbate military confrontation on the peninsula. However, on balance, Russia was- and continues to be- able to successfully negotiate the balancing act between the two states of Korean Peninsula.

\(15\) Russia and South Korea started a joint project of arms-for-debt swap, which was codenamed Brown Bear Project, to retrieve loans extended in 1991 to assist Russia's transformation into a market economy. The South Korean Roh Tae-woo government provided Russia $1 billion in bank loans and a $470 million commodities loan. Russia had to pay these loans in five years with a three years grace period. Since Russia was not ready to repay the debt, in 1995 the swap project was envisaged. For current status of the project, see (Jung Sung-ki 2008).
Inter-Korea Relations

The end of the Cold War appeared to herald the beginning of a new era in the international politics and ushered major change, transformation and readjustment of equations in the power politics of the different regions. However, in Northeast Asia, the end of the global systemic divide was not reflected in the changed equations of the major players of the region. Inter-Korean relations have not been restructured in any significant manner after the end of the Cold War. All the attempts of South Korea to engage North Korea for building a long lasting peace and cooperation on the peninsula have been thwarted by various setbacks emanating from the apparently rigid stands of both North Korea and the US. The settlement of the basic issues of recognition of one another and legitimacy are still elusive for the peninsula. This could be well exemplified by a recent development when the euphoria regarding the Summit Meet between South and North Korea could not be sustained and in early 2000s, North Korea ‘ventured into a secret uranium enrichment programme,’ which led to virtually negating all the positive developments (Berger 2004: 148).

In the backdrop of the emerging post-Cold War order, South Korean President Roh Tae-woo made a series of policy declarations to ease the prevalent tension on the peninsula emanating from the hostility between South and North. To tackle the complex issue of reunification of the two states, he outlined the need to build a national community through national self determination and reconciliation. Noteworthy in this regard are his inaugural message, the ‘Special Presidential Declaration for National Self-determination, Unification and Prosperity’ of 7 July 1988 and the ‘Korean National Community Unification Formula’ of 1989 (Kim Dong-won 2002: 61). In all these initiatives South Korea postulated a policy of ‘integration of a national society first, unification later.’ North Korea perceived these initiatives as an attempt to dilute the North Korean communist state structure and proposed to establish the ‘Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo.’ Pyongyang’s proposal, in essence, called for ‘national unification first, integration of national society through exchange and cooperation later.’ For this North Korea proposed its

On the basis of preliminary talks held between North and South Korea to seek common ground in the above stated positions, high level talks were resumed in October 1991 after their successful and simultaneous entry in the United Nations in September 1991. In December 1991, an ‘Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation’ was signed and was ratified in February 1992, which was called Basic Agreement. Both parties pledged that they would refrain from ‘mutual slander and sabotage’. Economic cooperation and reunion of separated family members were also on the agenda of this Basic Agreement, however, nothing substantial was achieved on the front. In another move, a ‘Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula’ was issued by Seoul and Pyongyang in February 1992. However, sharp differences in the positions of both sides regarding the course of reunification process remained unresolved. Moreover, the threat perception of North Korea also intensified following the collapse of the Socialist bloc. As a precondition to any real progress in the inter-Korean relations, it sought to address the politico-military confrontation and reduced threats of war by calling for the conclusion of a peace treaty with the United States, adoption of a non-aggression agreement between South and North Korea, and phased withdrawal of the US troops from the South Korea.

Improvements in the inter-Korean relations from 1988 to 1992 and the crystallisation of a mature understanding were thwarted in 1992, when the North Korean nuclear weapons controversy assumed prominence. In late 1992, all attempts to get the Basic Agreement implemented received a severe blow when South Korea discovered a large scale northern espionage operation on its territory (Sanger 1992).

16 North Korea never accepted any proposal related to separate and simultaneous entry of both the states in the UN during the Cold War days. However, in the changed circumstances it had to accept the move which was considered to be detrimental for the legitimacy contest between them (Sanger 1991).

North Korea also criticized Seoul’s decision to resume the ‘Team Spirit’ exercises in 1993.

Underlying all these allegations and counter allegations, was the contentious nuclear issue. This could not be resolved under the provisions of the agreement on making the peninsula free of nuclear weapons signed by South and North Korea in September 1991 and the Joint Nuclear Control Committee established under the agreement made little progress. South Korea demanded a provision for unannounced inspections, whereas North Korea demanded the opening of all the US bases in South Korea for scrutiny. Meanwhile, North Korea objected to the negotiations related to inspection of nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA). In March 1993, as part of its bargaining strategy North Korea threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), which it had signed in 1985 (Wit et.al. 2004, Snyder 1999, Kapur 1995). For North Korea, the nuclear issue would give them access to direct dealing with the US. Therefore, North Korea was more interested in talking to Washington on the issue than with Seoul. North Korean rhetoric about reducing Seoul to ‘a sea of fire’ further deepened mutual distrust in South and North Korea.18 Some other developments also contributed to escalation of tension on the peninsula such as the issue of status of the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) and North Korean logging workers. North Korea started to boycott the MAC, when a South Korean general was its head in March 1992.

An important turn in inter-Korean relations came up with the signing of a Nuclear Accord in Geneva between North Korea and the US on 21 October 1994. The talks to conclude the accord began with a secret visit of former US President Jimmy Carter to Pyongyang in June 1994.19 During all these negotiations, North Korea got the opportunity to directly deal with the US. However, South Korea was

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18 On March 19, 1994, the North Korean delegation to South Korea threatened the South Korean side by saying that the DPRK would answer “dialogue with dialogue” and “war with war.” Then, the North Korean head of the delegation, Pak Yong Su, finally declared, “Seoul is not far away [from the DMZ] and if war breaks out, Seoul will become a sea of fire” (The Unification White Paper 1995: 227).

19 The step to send former President Jimmy Carter to Pyongyang to negotiate on the nuclear issue was a shift in the US policy, which came in response to persistent North Korean demand to talk directly with the US. Though the US was not ready to give North Korea legitimacy by officially sending any government official to Pyongyang, it wanted to sort out the problem too. The step also constitutes the beginning of engagement policy of Washington vis-à-vis North Korea (Cortright 1997: 42).
apprehensive about the improvement on the US-North Korea relations. It perceived it as dilution of American commitment to the US-South Korean alliance (Kim Sung-han 1997). But in the KEDO process both South Korea and Japan became involved in a very significant manner and South Korean grievance of not being involved in initial negotiation process of the Nuclear Accord was adequately addressed.20

Although the process of dismantling of the nuclear programme of Pyongyang has not been smooth and issues like Kumchang-ri kept emerging from time to time.21 South and North Korean engagement intensified since the tenure of Kim Dae-jung as the President of South Korea. The signing of the Nuclear Accord proved to be a turning point in the political dynamics of the Korean Peninsula, because South Korea was assigned a pre-determined role in the Accord formulated by the US and North Korea. The subtleties of trilateral dynamics emerged after these developments. South Korean foreign policy gradually appeared to become more autonomous from the US grand strategy for the region, most visibly in the sunshine policy of Seoul towards North Korea, wherein the latter was offered many concessions under various proposals and initiatives (Suk Chin-ha 2003: 308). Unlike American demand for a 'specific' or 'more specific reciprocity,' South Korea emphasized the need for a 'comprehensive and long-term reciprocity.'22 South Korea and the US interests, vis-à-

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20 Although the Nuclear Accord of 1994 was bilaterally concluded by the US and North Korea without sufficient consultation with other players of the peninsular politics, the KEDO was conceptualised from the very beginning, as a multilateral platform where the majority of the concerned countries could come together and pull their resources to build two light water reactors in North Korea (Quinones 2007).

21 The US alleged that North Korea had been involved in a clandestine nuclear programme and it had seen satellite pictures which showed unusual activities near the site Kumchang-ri. Initially, North Korea was adamant that it would not allow inspection of the site but finally the issue was resolved and a team of inspectors reached the site in May 1999. The inspectors found a large space but could not get any evidence of nuclear activities at the site even in the past. According to a 25 June 1999 statement issued by US Department of State spokesman James Rubin, the 15-member team inspected Kumchang-ri from 18-24 May 1999. North Korea cooperated fully with the US team. Rubin stated that the delegation witnessed no efforts by North Korea to conceal the facility and dismissed allegations that nuclear equipment could have been removed prior to the inspectors' arrival. Rather, he stated that Kumchang-ri was at a stage of construction at which no other equipment other than construction equipment would be expected to be present (The United States Information Agency, 25 June 1999).

22 The point was made by Prof. Kim Keun-shik, University of North Korean Studies, during an interview with the author on July 2, 2008.
vis North Korea, apparently remained similar but there were differences in their priorities and the manner in which these interests should be pursued.

The gap in the manner of foreign policy implementation was clearly visible in the issue of missile development of North Korea. Although, South Korea is worried about Pyongyang’s missile development programme and export of missile technology as well as missiles to other countries, it does not insist on a policy of confrontation with it. Rather, it prefers a policy of engagement to address the objective and/or subjective threat perceptions of North Korea.

The policy of engagement followed by the South Korean administration resulted in a summit meet between the leaders of North and South in Pyongyang in June 2000. The summit meet was portrayed as a new beginning in inter-Korean relations, for which South Korea did not get sufficient support and encouragement from US President George W. Bush. The hardliner Bush administration emphasized more on the policy of ‘stick’ than ‘carrot to all the ‘rogue regimes’ which constituted the ‘axis of evil’ (The White House, 29 January 2002).

After coming to power, the Bush administration asserted its primacy in the global order in a more blunt and direct manner. Accordingly, it emphasized containing the ‘rogue regimes’ throughout the world (Kwak Tae-hwan and Joo Seung-ho 2003: 76). The policy of engagement was considered by the Republicans as a ‘soft option’ which had a long gestation period. However, Seoul, under the leadership of Kim Dae-jung felt the need for a rapprochement with Pyongyang, because any provocation on the part of North Korea would have serious implication for its security, given their geographical proximity (Kim Dae-jung 2004: 221).

Inter-Korean relations again got strained by the second nuclear crisis which erupted after North Korea’s First Vice-Foreign Minister Kang Seok-ju’s admission to the US Assistant Secretary of State, James Kelly, during his visit to Pyongyang on 4 October 2002, about conducting a new nuclear programme (Federal News Service 2003: 9-10). Actually, the rhetoric and harsh language used by the new US
administration can be seen as the main provocation behind the revelation. In January 2002, Bush had labelled North Korea as a member of an 'axis of evil' on the ground that such regimes have been sponsoring terrorism as their state policy and they also possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (The White House, 29 January 2002). Furthermore, on 10 January 2003, North Korea declared its withdrawal from the NPT on grounds of its dissatisfaction with the belligerent attitude of the US towards the North Korean security concerns (KCNA, 10 January 2003). Giving another blow to the Bush administration, North Korea publically announced, during the tripartite talks with the US and China held in Beijing in April 2003, that it possessed nuclear weapons. In July, North Korean nuclear ‘brinkmanship’ reached its zenith, when it announced that it had completed reprocessing of the spent nuclear fuel rods it had withdrawn (KCNA, 18 April 2003).

However, due to the above mentioned ‘relative autonomy’ of the South Korean foreign policy from the US policy, inter-Korean relations remained stable and throughout the emergence and deepening of second North Korean nuclear crisis, South Korea showed remarkable maturity and consistency in pursuance of its policy of engagement vis-à-vis North Korea. At the same time, the Bush administration also realized that a multilateral mechanism was the only way to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis. The first two rounds of Six-Party Talks, though inconclusive, exemplified the change in the US attitude. To address the North Korean threat perceptions, in mid-2003, US Deputy Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz during his visit to Seoul, announced a plan to ‘reposition’ some of its military forces stationed in South Korea. It meant moving the 37,000-strong US troops further south from its present location. But the announcement of the US was seen by North Korea as merely an attempt to reposition the troops to a more favourable position for a sudden ‘pre-emptive strike.’ North Korea made it clear that it would not be satisfied with

23 Most of the US troops in South Korea had been stationed in the northern part of the country, which meant spreading from the capital Seoul to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). North Korea finds the very presence of American troops there as threatening to its security.
anything less than total withdrawal of the US troops from the peninsula.\textsuperscript{24} The progress in the first two rounds of the Six-Party talks in the Beijing consequently was not satisfactory in any sense of the term. Basically, all multilateral attempts to resolve the North Korean issue should keep in mind the centrality of trilateral relations on the peninsula. Any progress on the nuclear issue would be achieved only when fundamental mutual accommodation among the three players is reached.

Looking at the inter-Korean relations from the military perspective, the trend which began in 1980s, led South Korea to 'surpass North Korea in military stock capital' (Hamm Taik-young 1999: 82-85). The success in economic development by South Korea was reflected in military expenditure too. In 1972, the defence expenditure of South Korea surpassed that of North Korea and the gap has been widening since. In 1990, the gap between the military expenditures of North and South Korea was cumulatively $38.7 billion.\textsuperscript{25} In 1991, South Korean military expenditure was $7.8 billion which was more than three times that of North Korea which spent $2 billion. In the decade since the end of the Cold War the differences have grown up to eight times. North Korean economic conditions deteriorated during the period, and this was reflected in the levels of military expenditure, which also came down to $1.3 billion in 2000. South Korea spent around $10 billion that year (SIPRI Yearbook 2001: 280). While looking at the percent of its national budget allocated for military preparedness, North Korean expenditure surpasses South Korea. North Korean allocation of higher percentage on its military could be explained as a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to match South Korean military expenditure. The origin of nuclear weapons programme of North Korea could also be seen from this

\textsuperscript{24} For a brief period, during South Korean President Kim Dae-jung’s visit to North Korea, reportedly North Korea accepted that the US force could be present on the Korean Peninsula as a stabilising force and observer of the DMZ, if Washington discarded its aggressive intent against North Korea and had a comprehensive treaty with it.

\textsuperscript{25} Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, \textit{SIPRI Year Book: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security}, New York, Oxford University Press, various issues. It is difficult to arrive at a consensus about the estimates of defence spending of North and South Korea because of difficulties in obtaining precise data and also in estimating the exchange rates. SIPRI’s estimates are largely corroborated by the annual surveys of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. However, there is a wide gap between the SIPRI’s data and the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency’s appraisal (IISS and ACDA various issues).
perspective. Nuclear weapons are considered to be a cost effective medium to establish an equation of deterrence and North Korean policy makers might have derived impetus from this logic, apart from other factors. A large part of North Korean military expenditure goes in maintenance and operation of existing military capability and only one fourth is spent in the improvement of military capabilities. By contrast, South Korea spends around 30 to 40 percent of its military expenditure on force improvement (The ROK Ministry of Defense, 1998: Appendix 10).

In the post-Cold War era, Pyongyang’s security threat was accentuated by multiple factors like slow down of its economic growth, military inferiority and above all, unsuccessful domestic reforms and the end of ideological and material support from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. China and Russia both reduced or cut their aid to Pyongyang and asked for hard currency payment in mutual trade. Moscow and Beijing reduced their arms deliveries to North Korea from $2.02 billion in 1987-89 to $65-70 million in 1992-94 (Arms Control and Disarmament Agency 1995). North Korea realized that it could not compete with South Korea in conventional weapons and could only resort to increasing human resource (SIPRI Yearbook 1996: 468). However, there were limitations to this option as well, as it had been working on labour intensive build up from the 1980s itself. The initial years of the post-Cold War period were good for South Korea which, in addition to economic and military superiority, was able to gain more legitimacy by establishing diplomatic relations with erstwhile and present communist states. To deal with the unfavourable situation, North Korea perceived a nuclear weapons programme as the ‘only panacea’ (Mazarr 1997: 35-54). It would be a ‘great leap forward’ in its arms race with South Korea (Mack 1991). The programme could also be useful in addressing the concerns of its energy crisis. North Koreans were overtly threatened by the US nuclear weapons during and after the Korean War, but they were not able to acquire any confirmed nuclear guarantee from either China or the USSR. They requested assistance from the Soviet Union in developing their own nuclear weapons, which was however, refused (Harrison 1993: 49).
The emergence of the nuclear weapons programme of North Korea as the central issue of concern for the security of the Korean Peninsula replaced the other specific issues of defence expenditure and their consequences. There were various estimates about the precise status of the North Korean nuclear weapons programme and it varied from none (just a bargaining chip) to five bombs during the period (Mazarr 1995). US President Bill Clinton, during his visit to South Korea in July 1993, warned North Korea against such bargaining tactics, declaring that if North Korea ever developed or used nuclear weapons, 'it would be end of their country' (The Korea Times, 13 July 1993). The US was adamant to bring North Korea under the safeguard agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The persistent demand of Washington and North Korean reluctance led the security environment to deteriorate in 1992-93 and Pyongyang even threatened to walk out from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993. North Korea demanded the US troop withdrawal from the peninsula as well as an end to the joint annual military exercise- Operation Team Spirit. Though North Korea finally signed the safeguard agreements with the IAEA, the issue of 'special inspection'26 and testing of missile Rodong 1 became bone of contention between the US and North Korea in 1993.

The US and South Korea, in an attempt to demonstrate their resolve to take stringent action against any North Korean adventure, announced OPLAN 5027 in 1993, which had been prepared in the 1980s. The plan recommended massive retaliatory action against a possible North Korean attack that would eliminate the North Korean state itself (Dong-A Ilbo, 7 February 1994). The situation in North Korea became so hostile that Clinton administration was about to deploy additional force on the Korean Peninsula when the nuclear deal between North Korea and the US was arrived at (Oberdorfer 1997: 324-325).

At present a kind of 'balance of terror' exists on the Korean Peninsula in which, North Korea appears to have lost the conventional arms race with South Korea,

26 The IAEA had never before demanded such an inspection for any other country on the behest of US intelligence reports. There could be two similar cases of Romania and Sweden but in both the cases there was no time restriction of one month to comply (Cumings 2004: 66).
has ‘asymmetric power advantage’ due to its nuclear weapons and missile capabilities (Kim Samuel S. 2002: 48). If one takes both quality and quantity into consideration, South Korea is in an advantageous position (Aspin 1992 and Hamm Taik-young 1999: 115). South Korea claims that though it is behind North Korea in terms of aggregate military power, it is adequately prepared to stop North Korean attempts to attack Seoul, even without the help of the US (The ROK Ministry of National Defense 2003). Their qualitatively superior tanks can outperform North Korean inferior tanks even though they are less in number (Suh Jae-jung 1999). South Korea has also been protected by the DMZ, which is difficult to cross as South Koreanartilleries would create a ‘killing zone’ in the area (O’Hanlon 1998 and O’Hanlon and Mochizuki 2003: Appendix 1). Thus it can be seen that the on the Korean Peninsula, from the Cold War days till date, ‘deterrence has been clear and unambiguous’ (Kang David C. 2003: 304). The armed balance between North and South Korea has been in clear favour of South Korea and taken together with the US expenditure for the peninsula, it becomes quite formidable. In the 1990s, North Korea’s arms capabilities have been less than one third of South Korea (Hamm Taik-young 1999: 115 and Dunningan 1993: 591).

North Korean weapons system is largely outdated, expecting its thirty fighter planes MIG-29s and this could also be countered by South Korea by sixty F-16s. In the main battle, tanks category also South Korean K-1 and M-1 Abraham cannot compared with the vintage T-54, T-55 and T-62 tanks of North Korea. The South Korean tanks are equipped with the latest state of the art facilities.

North Korea considered working on non-conventional weapons to match South Korean qualitative superiority; along with its nuclear programme, it worked on developing long range missile capabilities in the post-Cold War era. In the early 1990s, it combined four scud engines for building Rodong 1 missile, which has a range of around a 1000 kilometres. In its next effort to increase the range of its missile, it made Taepodong 1 in which it used Rodong in the first stage and Modified-C in the second stage and it could travel a distance of around 2000 kilometres. The North
Korean missile programme has been largely directed to increase the range of its missiles rather than its accuracy and it wants to have psychological advantage over South Korean and Japanese policy makers rather than preparing for any actual war situation. To an extent, the Clinton administration was able to understand the security logic of North Korea and the Defense Secretary accepted that North Korea missiles are primarily oriented to deter the US (Harrison 2001: 64). It recognized a security dilemma on the peninsula which could be only breached by affirmative action in form of an engagement policy. To replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty, it is essential to mutually acknowledge the security concerns of each other.27

It is important to note that in the post-Cold War era, inter-Korea relations, which were earlier determined by the global divide, gradually saw certain attempts to reach each other. Although, various contesting issues from military build-up to legitimacy issue were not diluted in any substantial manner, inter-Korean exchanges grew significantly despite the persistence of these issues (Hamm Taik-young 1998). South Korea President Roh Tae-woo initiated his policy of Nord Politik, which was targeted towards building workable relations with communist countries also, including North Korea (Jae Youl 1992). Reflecting the strong domestic support for reunification of the peninsula, the President took various initiatives to break the ice in the inter-Korean relations. The attempt was merely superficial gesture similar to the previous attempts during President Park Chung-hee in 1972. During the Park Chung-hee period, attempts to improve relations with North Korea were not part of a comprehensive plan and it was basically an attempt of the regime to show the Korean people that it was sensitive to the goal of reunification. There were hardly any backward-forward linkages within the isolated attempts at rapprochement.

However, the rapprochement attempts in the post-Cold War era could be considered more substantial attempts, which could be corroborated with other steps of

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27 There is dearth of North Korean documents and research papers which could help us to identify and understand North Korean threat perception properly. We can attempt to infer North Korean perspective by carefully analysing various North Korean official pronouncements from time to time (Hayes and Noerper 1997: 266).
South Korea to seriously work for improvement in the inter-Korean relations. The attempt had its domestic and external context as well, and in the perceived changed equations of regional politics, South Korea wanted to open an avenue of negotiations with North Korea, whose nuclear weapons programme could neutralise the South Korean advantages in conventional arms.

The end of the Cold War was considered to be the 'end of history' and defeat of communism as an alternate model of state building (Fukuyama 1992). Seoul perceived the change as a vindication of its own position in inter-Korean struggle. South Korea was willing to explore this opportunity to emerge victorious in its contest for legitimacy with North Korea. On the other hand, North Korea was going through its initial phase of economy crisis and it had to pay in hard currency for its trade with both Russia and China. North Korea also wanted to deflect the international attention from its nuclear weapons programme, which was gradually becoming the key issue of debate over the Korean issue.

There was a period of lull in the process of rapprochement in inter-Korean relations. The contention between Pyongyang and Washington over nuclear and missile issue and the direct American dealing with North Korea were not helpful in the continuation and improvement in the inter-Korean relations. However, after conclusion of the Nuclear Accord of 1994 between Pyongyang and Washington and more specifically after the initiation of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), gradually inter-Korean relations again saw a positive turn. South Korea willingly accepted all the responsibilities entrusted upon it under the KEDO provisions. It is significant that even during the direct talks with North Korea on the nuclear issue, Washington always insisted that any progress on the US-North Korea front was inextricably linked with the progress in the inter-Korean relations.

The convergence of policy objectives and means to achieve them between the US and South Korea helped in bringing South Korea back in the security dynamics of the peninsula (Cha Victor D. 1997 and Snyder and Glosserman 2006). South Korea not only eagerly participated in the KEDO programme but also provided humanitarian
assistance to North Korea. Engulfed in a severe economic crisis emanating from successive flood and famine, North Korea desperately needed this kind of assistance. Another round of deeper and comprehensive engagement between North and South Korea began with the election of Kim Dae-jung as the President of South Korea, who was a consistent supporter of a more conciliatory policy towards North Korea. He was against any alarmist view of North Korea and announced his sunshine policy to engage North Korea in a substantial manner. The sunshine policy was different from all its previous variants on the ground that it did not ask for strict reciprocity in the relations (Moon Chung-in 1999, Ku Yong-rok 2000, Kwak Tae-hwan 2002, Park Kyung-ae 2001). Moreover, the policy was not based on the prevalent assumption that the North Korean regime was on the verge of collapse by explosion or implosion. The Kim Dae Jung’s initiative can be fruitfully analysed in the functionalist theory of international politics that prescribes for economic and cultural exchanges to improve political relations between two countries. South Korea tried to diversify its relations with Pyongyang and focused its attention on non-political exchange and interactions (Kim Dae-jung 1997).

Empathising with the North Korean threat perception for being economically weak and less close to its old allies, Seoul gave priority to end the Cold War confrontation on the Korean Peninsula rather than reunification, in its dealings with North Korea. The persistent South Korean efforts finally culminated in a summit meet between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-ill in June 2000 (The Economist, 17 June 2000 and Shim Jae-hoon 2000: 16-20 and The ROK Ministry of Unification 2000). It was the first time that leaders of both the states of the Korean Peninsula met directly to negotiate the Korean issue. The Clinton administration in its last phase also started the Perry Process with North Korea to reduce mutual threats. The Perry Process also helped in creating conducive atmosphere for a rapprochement between North and South Koreas.

Inter-Korean rapprochement saw another challenging phase with the coming of George W. Bush to power, who was in favour of a tough posture vis-à-vis North
Korea and considered the Nuclear Accord of 1994 as an act of appeasement (Litwak 2007: 257). From the very beginning of his tenure, President George W. Bush wanted to review America’s North Korean policy. Progress in the inter-Korean relations did not get active support from the fact that there was a clear disagreement between South Korea and the US over their North Korea policy. However, in spite of change in the US policy towards North Korea from ‘carrot’ to ‘stick,’ Seoul persisted with its engagement policy towards Pyongyang. Even the ‘second nuclear crisis,’ which soured Pyongyang and Washington relations drastically, did not cast its shadow on the South Korean policy of engagement with North Korea. The Chinese effort to bring Pyongyang again in multilateral negotiations in the form of the Six-Party talks had full support from Seoul. Whenever, there was any deadlock in the talks, it was Chinese and South Korea efforts, which brought back contending parties again on the negotiation table. After the three unsuccessful rounds when the talks were stalled, South Korean Unification Minister visited Pyongyang and struck a package deal with North Korea to bring it again in the process. When North Korea conducted its missile tests in May 2006 and nuclear tests on 2 October 2006, South Korea maintained its policy of engagement (Snyder 2007) and it was probably one of the stabilising factors that kept tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the region under check. Inter-Korean exchanges continued during the troubled phase. Finally, in the Six-Party talks, a framework for dismantling the North Korean nuclear programme was arrived at and inter-Korean relationship was stable in the period (The International Herald Tribune, 13 February 2007). In the last days of his Presidency, South Korean leader Roh Moo-hyun was able to have the second summit meet with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in October 2007 (Onishi 2007).

There was apprehension that newly elected South Korean President Lee Myung-bak would be more demanding on various issues and would link South Korean economic aid to North Korea with progress on the denuclearisation front (Petrov 2008). However, Washington’s changed approach to engage North Korea and
certain tangible progress in the process of North Korean nuclear disarmament,\textsuperscript{28} the new South Korean government has no choice but to continue with the engagement process. Recently, there have been some misunderstanding between North and South Koreas pertaining to death of a South Korean tourist at the Mt. Geumgang Tourist place (Kim Sue-young 2008); overall, inter-Korea relations have been stable.

In the light of above discussion it could be said that during the Cold War days, both states were involved in the dilemma in which defence preparedness of one was seen by the other as an offensive move. In the post-Cold War era, South Korean economic and military capabilities were far superior to North Korea. After the realisation of its superiority, the successive South Korean governments have taken steps to resolve this dilemma by providing unilateral concessions to North Korea. However, most of these concessions have been limited to economic aspect and very few attempts have been made to implement it in the military preparedness. The limitation of South Korean efforts is also linked to its security understanding with the US and it needs US consent to go ahead with any further attempt at military confidence building measures with North Korea. Again the explanation for the US-South Korea alliance persistence on the basis of identity issue and asset specificity helps in understanding limited policy choices for South Korea.\textsuperscript{29}

At another level, North Korea has not breached the psychological barrier of the legitimacy war of the Cold War days. Rather than improvement of its relations with South Korea it is more concerned about its dealing with the US. Throughout the post-Cold War period, it insisted on direct talks with Washington. When a multilateral effort to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty was made in the form of the Four-Party talks, North Korea objected to the inclusion of South Korea in the process. North Korea considered that the US, China and North Korea were involved

\textsuperscript{28} North Korea has reportedly provided full list of its nuclear installations and have destroyed its cooling tower at Yongbyon but again North Korea, due to disagreement with the US over Washington taking more time to remove it from the list of states sponsoring terror, has been trying to reconstruct the facility.

\textsuperscript{29} For example roughly half of all South Korean military procurement comes from the US and almost 80 percent of South Korean foreign military purchases come from the US (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment- China and Northeast Asia 13 May 2002).
in the signing of the Armistice and a peace treaty to replace it needed to be negotiated among the signatories of the Armistice Agreement only. Pyongyang has not been able to accept the changes which have taken place in the security dynamics of the peninsula and any demand for the exclusion of South Korea would be an act of not accepting the objective reality of the peninsula. Even during the summit meet between the leaders of South Korea and North Korea in Pyongyang, North Korean press reported that the meeting was going to be held between South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and Kim Yong-nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly, projecting Kim Jong-il above both the leaders (Park Han S. 2001). The legitimacy war between the two states gets reflected at all the fora of interactions between the two states. It limits the scope of the South Korean policy of engagement to break the vicious circle of ‘security dilemma.’

**Domestic Context**

The domestic factors of both the states of the Korean Peninsula are also relevant in the conceptualization of security and it is pertinent to look at the domestic scenario in North and South Korea, which definitely has its bearing on the security paradigm of the peninsula (Park Myung-lim 2000). Apart from changes at other levels of analyses, which affected the change and continuity of the security structure of the peninsula, on the domestic fronts of both South and North Koreas, significant changes took place. At times these domestic changes have corresponded with the change in external environment, at others they have been independent from them.

In the early 1990s, there were two distinct trends on the North Korea domestic front, i.e., political consolidation of the regime and further deterioration in the economic situation of the country. In the period of trouble, Kim Jong-il strengthened his position by assuming the power to make appointments in various key positions. He was elected as the first vice chairman of the National Defence Commission in May 1990 and became Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) in
December 1991. However, after the death of Kim Il-sung in July 1994, it took a long time for Kim Jong-il to stabilize his position as the Chairman of the National Defence Commission which was proclaimed in the revised 1998 constitution to be the ‘highest post of the state.’ In this period, North Korean economic crisis worsened by successive famine and flood problems. In December 1993, it had already been conceded by the government that third seven-year plan (1987-93) had not been able to achieve the formulated targets. The North Korean regime attributed this failure to the collapse of the socialist world market and the continuous ‘imperialist offensive against socialism.’ Many attempts such as readjustment in growth rate were made during the plan period itself (Rodong Sinmun, 9 December 1993) but remained unsuccessful. From 1989 to 1999, the North Korean actual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrank by 25 percent. In 1999, again the North Korean economy started showing some sign of recovery and in September 2002, it took further steps to invite foreign investment in the country by creating two new Special Administered Regions. North Korean steps to open its economy- albeit in a limited manner- had a direct correlation with the domestic political consolidation of Kim Jong-il regime and encouragement from China (Koo 2006). Various North Korean political and business leaders visited China and closely studied the Chinese economic reform process (The New York Times, 18 January 2001). The limited opening of the North Korean economy might have significant long-term implications for the nature of state in North Korea and which would certainly influence the security structure of the peninsula. The nature of the regime could not be totally delinked from the economic processes of the state and it is to be seen how far North Korea is likely to go on this path of economic reform. China could provide a model to be emulated in this regard, despite the divergences in the North Korean and Chinese cases.

North Korean domestic factors would certainly affect the legitimacy war between the two states of the peninsula. The domestic competition for constituting the sole legitimate political authority of the entire peninsula has been the hallmark of relations between them and it had led to war, confrontation, division and tension on
the peninsula. The contest has shaped the way of life, perceptions and historical understanding of both the regimes. Institutions were established based on above perceptions. For instance, the perception and identity of being an anti-communist state is so powerful in South Korea that even after the marginalisation of communism as an alternate model of state building, still the word 'communist' could alarm a significant section of South Koreans.30 The North Korean economic crisis and loss of closeness with its old allies, coupled with increasing international attention on its nuclear and missile development programmes, worsened the image of the North Korean regime. It is said that the crisis might have led to political consolidation in North Korea. The decade of 1990s began with economic depression and large scale food, energy and foreign exchange shortage in North Korea.

The North Korean economic crisis did not entirely result from the demand by China and Russia for hard cash in the bilateral trade. Its growing inefficiency in economic production for more than a decade and a conservative policy to deal with the situation were equally significant in the deterioration of the situation. This compelled North Korea to think more pragmatically about its priorities, wherein survival than conservative commitment to ideology assumed more importance. North Korea not only tried to revive its economy by inviting foreign capital in the form of Rajin-Sonbong industrial complex in the July 2002 reform proposal, but it also opened entry to some of the automobile and tourism companies such as Hyundai in the complex. However, the change and openness in the economic policies of North Korea was a reluctant attempt to imitate the Chinese experience of separating political and economic aspects in its reforms. The contest of legitimacy between North and South Korean states had two dimensions throughout the Cold War period- regime performance and ideology. North Korea had already lost on the first and even in dire need it did not want to surrender on the second. So, Pyongyang kept the changes to a

30 In 1999, in a survey conducted by the Korea Institute of National Unification, image of North Korea was varied from cooperation to confrontation. 32. 6% respondents supported cooperation, 28.7% caution, 19.3% assistance, 8.2% confrontation and 3.1% competition with North Korea (Choi Soo-young et.al. 1999: 9-10).
minimum, and tried to compensate it with its assertiveness reflected in the political and security policies.

The complexity of North Korea increased further with the death of ‘great leader’ Kim Il-sung few months before the signing of the Nuclear Accord with the US in October 1994.31 North Korea however did not want to show any weakness in the process and it went ahead with the talks on nuclear issue and finally concluded the Accord. But apparent consistency in North Korean behaviour during the Kim Il-sung period and afterwards, does not mean that the succession process in the Korean Peninsula was fully smooth. After more than five years of the death of his father, Kim Jong-il official inaugurated his regime. After the first session of the Sixth Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) in September 1998, Kim Jong-il became the leader of North Korea in his capacity as the Chairman of the National Defence Commission (NDC). At the same time, a veteran diplomat Kim Yong-nam became Chairman of the SPA Presidium and thus the titular head of the state. Till that time there were some doubt over the succession process in North Korea and there were some other contestants for Kim Jong-il’s position. From 1994 to 1999, the regime succession process was not entirely smooth in Pyongyang and even though Kim Jong-il had been officially declared as Kim Il-sung’s successor in February 1974, it took longer period for the North Korean polity to stabilise under Kim Jong-il. Setting aside all the doubts finally in the SPA meeting, Kim Yong-nam declared that ‘the NDC chairman is the highest post of the state.’

During these years, on the external political front, North Korea participated in the Four-Party talks and given the domestic political instability, North Korea was not in a position to accept any change in its previously held position on the issue of peace treaty. This meant that it could accept South Korea as a party in the process of replacement of the Armistice into a peace treaty. From the point of view of domestic

31 Kim Il-sung died in July 1994 after an ad-hoc secret understanding with the US government delegate Jimmy Carter to put a ban on its plutonium-based nuclear weapons programme. After the death of Kim Il-sung, the formalization of deal seemed difficult, however, North Korea signed the Agreed Framework on 21 October 1994 without creating any complexity.
turmoil in North Korea, the talks were bound to be unsuccessful. With the resolution of domestic issue of succession, North Korea refocused its attention on the economic crisis that had further worsened by floods in 1995 and 1996 and a severe drought in 1997. In September 1997, it made a constitutional amendment to give more free hand to technocrats who were in-charge of economic affairs, further concessions from the conservative ideological position. Gradually after consolidation of power, in July and September 2002, Kim Jong-il’s regime took another step to open up its economy by establishing two Special Administered Regions (SARs) in Sinuiju and Kaesong. It is part of North Korean ‘new thinking’ campaign (Rodong Sinmun, 1 and 4 January 2001 and Vantage Point 2001) but is still hard to say whether the steps would be more institutionalised for sustained reform in future.

The nature of North Korean regime makes any distinction between the security of state and security of regime impossible. There is no change in the structure of communist regime of North Korea from the past and still any threat to the regime has been still propagated by ruling elite as a threat to the state. Unlike, the post-Cold War South Korea, North Korean referent of security has never been people and it has always taken conservative territorial concept of state. So, even though during the economic crisis when approximately half a million people died in the famine related deaths, North Korea launched its military first policy (Cumings Meredith Woo 2001). It makes the people suffering an act of patriotism and puts state above individual, which could not be possible in a democratic and people responsible state such as South Korea. The role and limitation of media to report about these deaths and find fault in governmental process is simply impossible as all the means of mass communication have been either state owned or at least state controlled in North Korea.

In the South Korea too, the beginning of the post-Cold War era overlaps with various changes at the domestic level. After return to direct presidential elections in 1987, the South Korean polity has become increasingly democratic and rise of civil society has been the most important gain from this change (Lee Sook-jong 2004: 2).
The rise of a democratic polity also partially warranted a reconciliatory approach vis-à-vis North Korea. A strong sentiment of reunification has always been present in South and North Korea from the beginning of the two state structures. However, with the advent of 'genuine' democracy, the sentiment had got increasingly reflected in the policy priorities of successive South Korean governments. In the post-Cold War era, developments in the domestic polity of South Korea led to a shift in the South Korean approach towards North Korea. The nature of change in polity led to an emphasis of human security by putting the individual at the centre of security conceptualisation in South Korea. It does not imply that the South Korean domestic security conceptualisation has fully transcended the territorial concept of state. It means only that the emphasis has shifted from one to another without abandoning either of them. The South Korean initiatives could also be attributed to its economic success. On the domestic front as well, Seoul has demonstrated its economic credentials convincingly. Even in the arms race, the South Korean superiority in conventional arms was beyond doubt. The South Korean internal strength made it easier for the regime to opt for a liberal policy towards North Korea.

The role of perception also becomes relevant in the study of security conceptualisation of South Korea. North Korea, which was considered as a threat during the authoritarian state structure in South Korea, is no longer perceived so, to the same degree, even though it possesses nuclear weapons and missile to reach throughout the territorial stretch of South Korea. A democratic polity cannot overlook the (subjective) perceptions of the people and decision makers have to take cognizance of them in the policy making. Objectively speaking, North Korean nuclear weapons programme and missiles like Taepodong I reflect a more threatening posture on the part of North Korea in the post-Cold War era, compared to the earlier period when South Korea had a clear edge in the conventional arms build-up. But soft issues

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32 There are some interesting studies about the regime types and prospects of peace among them. The democratic peace theory, which has been well elaborated by Bruce Russett in his seminal work, concludes that genuine democracies do not fight with one another (Russet 1993, Russet 1995, Lake 1992). For a historical survey of democratic regimes and peace, see (Choi Ajin 2001). However, few other scholars don't think that regime type has any direct bearing on the peace (Desch 2002).
like same culture, race, language and nationhood could provide a possible explanation for this subjective perception of objective reality. The significance of popular perception could be seen also in the US-South Korea relations as well. Earlier the US was considered as the saviour of South Korea in any possible North Korean attack. However, in the changed domestic context Washington is considered to be an impediment or obstacle in the rapprochement between the two states of the peninsula. *(See Table 4.1)* Though the US-ROK security alliance has not weakened even after the emergence of minor frictions in their relations based on their foreign policy priorities and their approaches towards North Korea, the changed perception might be reflected in future policy formulation of South Korea.

**Table 4.1: Images of the Unites States and North Korea**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>North Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Gallup Korea Survey (Sample Size 1054), December 2002*

The election of Kim Dae-jung in December 1997 as the President of South Korea was the culmination of democratisation process in South Korea. He emphasised on a more comprehensive engagement with North Korea. His sombre attempt in the form of a sunshine policy was basically a reflection of popular mood in South Korea and even though the US republican government found the policy too soft, he went ahead with his summit meet with the North Korean leader. Kim Dae-jung, without being too much perturbed by the economic crisis of 1997, showed his full resolve to move forward with his agenda, which had a clear mandate of the people of South Korea. Despite obvious opposition from the US, his successor Roh Moo-hyun too continued with the policy. Notwithstanding, the negative developments unleashed after the US allegation that North Korea had acquired Highly Enriched Uranium
(HEU), Seoul has been persistent with its reconciliatory approach vis-à-vis Pyongyang.

Thus, if we compare the developments on the domestic fronts of North and South Korea, the most fundamental change has occurred in the South Korean political structure in the post-Cold War days. However, it has hardly any correlation with the end of the Cold War. It has affected the alliance behaviour of South Korea and its policy towards North Korea, finally affecting the security structure of the peninsula quite substantially. The political transformation in South Korea has changed the 'referent' of security and is also responsible for the surfacing of popular sentiment for reunification. The impact of these changes would be certainly reflected in South Korea's relations with the US and China, which would finally change the security landscape of the peninsula. The North Korean polity in the post-Cold War period has not been as stable as it was in the previous era and on the economic front the situation continued to worsen. The limited opening of the North Korean economy could be a future impetus to change in the peninsula.

Deepening of democracy in South Korea has led to engagement efforts by South Korea towards North Korea. However, at the same time the Cold War identity of Seoul as an anti-communist state creates a duality in the popular perception within South Korea. On the one hand, Seoul has began the sunshine policy to engage Pyongyang, but on the other hand, the South Korean military expenditure and its alliance with the US are justified and considered at the core of the security policy of Seoul on the ground that it needs to deter a possible North Korean aggression. Similarly, the NSL which was promulgated during the heyday of the Cold War still remains an institution of the past, which influences the domestic realm. Ideational factors such as people's perceptions, mindsets and ideological orientation vis-à-vis the Cold War and North Korea do not seem to be able to adjust to the changed external context.

Seoul's attempts to engage Pyongyang have been influenced by the gradual deepening of democracy in South Korea (Chung Chien Peng 2003 and Cumings
Democratization has brought up a popular demand for reunification of South and North Korea. In the early days of the former Kim Young-sam government, the President opined in a public statement that inter-Korean relations were more important than any international alliance. Later, in a public survey, more than 60 percent of South Koreans expressed their dissatisfaction with the US military presence in Korea. A majority were opposed to the cost-sharing by South Korea for maintaining the US Forces in Korea (USFK). The changing South Korean perception of the alliance with the US could be attributed to the perceptible diminishing threat from North Korea (Kie-chang 1998: 246). There are also occasional incidents of friction between the US troops stationed in the densely populated area with the locals and a quest for 'genuine' sovereignty by South Korea.

On the divided Korean Peninsula, security has been analysed from two important viewpoints- state-centric and nation-centric (Kim Ki-jung and Yoon Deok-ryong 1999: 106-108). The state-centric view considers security of state as of utmost importance and given the North Korean threat of aggression, South Korea can not be complacent or soft as it might be perceived by North Korea as a sign of weakness. The state-centric viewpoint advocates a cautious approach towards North Korea. The nation-centric viewpoint does not consider inter-Korean relations as an inter-state relation. A composite Korean nationalism is the bedrock of this understanding and it favours reconciliatory policy towards North Korea. During the Cold War period, the first viewpoint dominated the inter-Korean relations. The viewpoint was based on the hard reality and experiences of South Korea in the Korean War and various North Korean moves such as the military attack on the Blue House in 1968 and Yangon incident of 1983. Depiction of North Korea in the education curricula as an aggressive communist enemy further reinforced the state-centric approach throughout 2000).

33 The author interviewed former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in June 2006 and he emphasised the point that there is a direct correlation between democratization process in South Korea and strong support for South Korean engagement policy vis-à-vis North Korea (See Appendix 1).
34 In the Blue House Raid, a group of North Korean commandos crossed DMZ and raided Blue House, the official residence of the South Korean President on January 21, 1968. In the attempt, wife of President Park Chung-hee was killed and the President himself had a narrow escape (Bolger 1999).
35 On October 9, 1983, North Korean guerrillas tried to assassinate South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan and his other cabinet members when they were on an official trip to Yangon, Burma. Although President escaped unhurt, several key members of the cabinet died in the bomb blast.
the 1960s, 70s and 80s (*Jong-Ang Ilbo*, 19 June 2000). With the end of the Cold War this state-centric approach does not remain the sole discourse on the Korean Peninsula. In the changed scenario, there have been studies, on the discourse of national identity in Korea (Son Key-young 2006). These changes have significantly affected the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula in the post-Cold War era.

**Concluding Remarks**

A survey of the constituents of the Korean security paradigm makes it obvious that there are elements of both continuity and change in it. In one sense, two virtual-alliances which were manifestations of the bipolar international system in the Korean Peninsula and which arguably had the most important bearing on the Korean security paradigm, still continue with few significant changes. The most important change at this level has been that in the post-Cold War era these virtual-alliances have become more porous and diluted. The change has been very significant as it has provided space for the changed role of China in the Korean security, which will be discussed in the next chapter. At the next level, the role and bilateral relations of the regional actors have also become interconnected. In a way, their relationship has not remained clear and predictable, as it was during the Cold War. Sometimes, this volatility in the relationship of regional actors have created less coherent and less predictable security scenario in the region and in the peninsula. However, it could also be perceived as a change in a positive direction as it could be a beginning of multilateralism in the region. At the inter-Korean level, the tension and hostility has not been as pronounced as they were during the Cold War days. Even though both the states of the peninsula contest and confront each other in different arenas, the post-Cold War confrontations between them are marked by increased dialogue, interactions and exchanges. As described in the last section, the domestic contexts in North and South Koreas have also significantly changed in the post-Cold War era and they provide better chances for engagement between the two regimes of the Korean Peninsula. The domestic contexts have also made it necessary for these regimes to contemplate the reduction of the role of regional players in the Korean Peninsula.