The chapter deals with emerging contours of regional security dynamics in Northeast Asia and examines how China is increasingly assuming a significant role in defining the security architecture of the region. China’s growing centrality in not only Northeast Asia, but also in the Asia-Pacific security framework as a whole, has a vital affect on the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula. The new contours of security in the region could be attributed to the growing significance of China in the Asia-Pacific security architecture, nascent regionalism in Northeast Asia (Akaha 1999, Kim Samuel S. 2004, Rozman 2004, Armstrong et.al. 2006), and the evolution of the PRC’s ‘new security’ concept in the late 1990s (Qinggong and Wei 1997, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2002). On the basis of these new developments in Asia and Northeast Asia, the chapter evaluates the possibility of the emergence of multilateralism in the region, and whether the heightened significance of China in Korean affairs would reduce importance of the US in the region.
Emerging Asia-Pacific Security Architecture

In the last decade, the most important change in the Asia-Pacific security architecture has been the rise of China as the most important economic and military power in the region. This needs to be also seen in the context of the decline of Japanese influence due to its economic stagnation and the gradual and slow but steady rise of India in the regional political and economic landscape. Since the later half of 1990, in another development, there has also been a strong move towards establishing an Asian economic community or broader East Asian community around the proposal of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), according to the framework of ASEAN+3. The US has been a keen observer of the development in the Asia-Pacific landscape and is seriously reviewing its priorities, policies and equations in the region. In the post-Cold War era, China’s steady rise has presented a difficult choice for the US between containment and cooperation. In the post-Cold War era, the US has largely been following a dual policy vis-à-vis China. It wants to carry on its economic exchanges with the PRC, which are mutually beneficial. However, it is also careful about the Chinese military build-up as well as growing Chinese all round- political, military and economic exchanges in the region. It has also been suggested that there is no country in the Asia-Pacific region, which is really taking overt measures to counter China and the onus of doing so depends on the US more than any other regional country (Kang David C. 2008: 3-7). It appears that in the next decade, a covert contest between the US and China might be the main undercurrent of Asia-Pacific security, which could take the form of an overt containment policy by the US, if China becomes more active as a ‘revisionist’ power in the region. The US perceives China’s rise as the key driver in the changing security landscape in Asia (Chanlett-Avery and Vaughn 2008: 1, McDevitt 2003: 149-158, Klingner 2004, Sokolsky et.al. 2000).

Since 2006, the US has been trying to reach out to the three other important players of regional politics- Australia, Japan and India. It wants to explore the methods to counter the growing significance of China in regional politics. Although,
no formal quadrilateral grouping exists till now, the *Malabar-07* naval exercise among the four countries-the US, Japan, Australia and India-in September 2007, provided an opportunity to have naval cooperation between them. The quadrilateral naval exercise is also important as it could be a stepping stone for a closer military cooperation between these countries in future. Before the *Malabar-07*, there were also attempts such as the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue among the US, Australia and Japan in 2006 (Tow et.al. 2007, Thomas 2007). Some observers caution that if the US continues to establish strategic alliances with these countries, which are apparently posited against China, it could trigger in a negative response from China.

For the present, China does not want to start any direct confrontation with the US. However, overt US efforts to counter China would give it no choice but to respond. China is well aware of the constraints and opportunities of present Asia-Pacific security equations and is trying to navigate in a more cautious and non-threatening manner (Zweig and Jianhai 2005 Metzger and Myers 1996). China has been trying to extend its reach in the region, at the same time, it is quite concerned about its image also. The image of China as a peace loving country would make its military modernisation and related efforts less threatening to the other regional players.

The changing landscape of Asia-Pacific security is significant for the Korean security paradigm for two major reasons. First, the relation between the US and China, which is the key determinant of regional security, would have a direct bearing on the virtual-alliance systems, which this study has shown as, one of the key variables in determining the Korean security paradigm. Basically, China has been able to provide serious challenge to the US-centric ‘hub and spoke’ alliance model in Northeast Asia. There are scholars who do not accept this opinion (Shambaugh 2005, Jisi 2004, Sutter 2002, Ying 2003a, Ying 2003b, Johnston 2004, Limaye 2003, Yee and Storey 2002). However, China has been able to emerge as the most important player in the Asia-Pacific emerging regionalism through its
bilateral trade relationships, partnership in the East Asian Summit, and the ASEAN+3 forum (Nanto 2008).

China has also been actively involved in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which has been perceived by Washington as an attempt to develop an alternate security partnership to the American security grouping in the region. Chinese defence expenditure rose by 17.8 percent to about $45 billion in 2007, following a 14.7 percent increase in 2006. Growing Chinese military strength and its economic and diplomatic efforts to forge a broad-based partnership in the region seems to be a new element in the strategic calculus of the region and the US initiative to have earlier mentioned quadrilateral naval exercise appears to be an attempt to counter Chinese policies in the region. Secondly, it is also significant that in the quadrilateral naval exercise, South Korea was not included, though it has historically been an important ally of the US in the region. South Korea has shown mild displeasure with the exercise and there could be a remote possibility that South Korea might review its alliance preferences between the US and China if the trend continues (Chanlett-Avery 2008: 20).

Eventually, the ongoing dynamics of the Asia-Pacific security scenario presents a strong case of a possible contest between a ‘status quoist’ power US and a potentially ‘revisionist’ power China. Their contest would definitely have direct bearing on the Korean Peninsula. As mentioned earlier, in the emerging equations, South Korea appears to be less important for the US in the broader scheme of Asian security.

As examined, China has already been able to improve its economic and political exchanges with South Korea and there is a possibility of a shift in the South Korean position within the regional architecture by pushing it closer to China. However, the South Korean response is not likely to witness a fundamental shift in the short-term, as it would wait and watch how US and China are going to

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1 The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an intergovernmental mutual-security organization founded in 2001 that includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
accommodate or contest each other in emerging Asia-Pacific security architecture. For the present, the US wants to send a clear signal to China that though Washington’s strategic posture in the region is to accommodate China’s peaceful economic rise, Beijing should refrain from any attempt to fill in the geopolitical security vacuum in a manner which appears to be against the US interests in the region (Chanlett-Avery and Vaughn 2008: 17).

**Regionalism in Northeast Asia and China: Status and Prospects**

Emerging Northeast Asian regionalism could be linked to the growing economic exchanges between the East Asian countries in recent times in spite of the presence of various politically contested issues in their bilateral relations (Kim Gye-dong 2004). In the region, a process of intensification of cooperation and cooperative ideas and practices among the states of the region—such as the two Koreas, Japan, China, Russia and even the US—has continued since 1990s. In the post-Cold War era, various agreements for establishing partnerships between the states of the region have been possible such as normalisation of South Korea relations with Russia in 1990 and with China in 1992, the US-Russian ‘friendship and partnership’ in 1992, ‘a constructive partnership’ between China and Russia in 1994, China-US ‘Constructive strategic partnership’ in 1997, Japan-Russia ‘mutual trust partnership’ in 1997 and China-Japan ‘friendly cooperative partnership in 1998. All these developments are posited to improve cooperation and coordination among the regional countries to avoid them being aimed against or harming the interests of a third party (Xuetong 2004: 28). However, there are at least two interrelated issues in the region which pose serious challenges to emergence of regionalism in Northeast Asia. First, the obstacles in the process are, what may be termed, the *hard* issues such as ongoing territorial and maritime disputes,² military build-up by different

² Main territorial disputes in Northeast Asia are the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands (Seoul versus Tokyo), the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Beijing versus Tokyo), the Northern Territories (Tokyo versus Moscow), the Northern Limit Line on the Yellow/West Sea (Seoul versus Pyongyang), and the
states, and the issue of nuclear proliferation. The second problems stem from the soft issues, such as constant disputes over colonial and historical issues, exclusivist nationalist sentiments, and resultant mutual mistrust.

However, with significant increase in their bilateral economic exchanges and interdependency, the countries of the region have been gradually realising the need of a regional mechanism to deal with common issues (Cha Victor D. 2004a). These countries have been seriously debating prospect of Northeast Asian Security Regionalism (NEASR) (Yongtao 2004: 38). China has been quite enthusiastic about the process of emergence of this nascent regionalism in the region (Munakata 2006: 156). It is important to emphasis that in economic sphere, a similar kind of ‘hub and poke’ relationship has emerged in Northeast Asia around China. China has replaced the US as the larger trade partner of most of the regional countries. In the late 1990s, China adopted its “New Diplomacy” (xin waijiao), one of the two guiding principles of which was, that it sought to actively engage in international affairs by cooperation, putting aside disputes to avoid confrontations and promote multilateral communication and cooperation (Hunag 2004: 238). Within the framework of its ‘New Diplomacy’, China proposed “New Security Concept” (xin anquan guan) in the late 1990s, which talks about a broader common security based on mutual cooperation and benefit. With these new concepts in its foreign policy, China seeks to have multilateral and constructive cooperation with other countries to solve existing disputes and promote regional prosperity (Bijian 2003).

Chinese significance in Northeast Asian regionalism is based on its insistence on three points: “1) To take development as a central theme and promote common prosperity; 2) To construct harmonious ties with its neighbouring countries, so as to maintain peace and stability in the region; and 3) To realise mutual benefits through cooperation and coordination” (Yongtao 2007: 42). China in various official pronouncements made it clear that any attempt to establish and strengthen Spratly Islands (China versus six other East Asian states). Besides, with the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1994, the enlarged exclusive economic zones pose a clear and present danger of a new pattern of maritime conflict in the region.
regionalism in Northeast Asia is not narrow or exclusively geared against any other country such as the US. Chinese New Security Concept takes a pragmatic view of the US presence in the region (Huang 2004: 242). Chinese opposition to the US-Japan or US-ROK security alliances has become milder and it does not unconditionally support North Korea's demand that 'all foreign forces must be withdrawn from Korea' (Huang 2004: 242).

The Six-Party Talks and Emergence of Multilateralism

The Six-Party talks since 2003 were convened to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue and there is a possibility that it could lead to the emergence of multilateralism in Northeast Asia. The two regimes on the Korean Peninsula, China, the US, Russia and Japan are parties to this long and tedious negotiation process on the issue. The talks are important not because there has been concrete progress in the dismantlement of North Korean nuclear programme but also because there have been specific provisions for regional cooperation, especially in the field of energy. One of the five Joint Working Groups, which were established according to the February 13 agreement among the parties, exclusively deals with Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (The International Herald Tribune, 13 February 2007, Appendix 4). The process was thus perceived as a stepping stone to arriving at a multilateral security regime in the Northeast Asian region and which would definitely have far-reaching consequence for the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula (Park Myung-lim 2004, Han Young-sup and Lee Seong-ha et.al. 2005). The negotiations also brought growing and arguably changed significance of China in determining the security architecture of the Korean Peninsula.

The process has also reemphasised the changed Chinese role in constituting the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula. China, which was supposed to be the
closest ally of North Korea during the Cold War period, has now come to be considered as an ‘honest broker’ of peace between the two contending regimes of the peninsula (Wu 2005, Harrison 2001, Tkacik Jr. 2006). China’s role in the ‘second episode’ of the nuclear crisis on the peninsula since September 2002 has become more constructive, balanced and positive.

After revelation about North Korea’s alleged uranium based nuclear programme by the US, a deadlock between Pyongyang and Washington emerged on the nuclear issue. China took the initiative by first convening Three-Party talks to discuss a multilateral negotiation mechanism and eventually came to provide not only the venue for the Six-Party talks, but has also been playing a key role in the process. China showed its displeasure when North Korea conducted nuclear tests in October 2006. But, contrary to the US and Japan’s tough stance and advocacy for punitive actions against North Korea, China along with South Korea preferred to approach the issue diplomatically and to arrive at a solution.

The ‘second episode’ of the nuclear crisis on the peninsula and growing anti-Americanism in South Korea also overlap with the changing Chinese image in South Korea. China’s growing economic and other interactions with South Korea changed its image in South Korea. China continues to have close relations with North Korea and with a change in China’s image in South Korea, Beijing’s role and significance has strengthened in the Korean affairs. Chinese constructive and stabilizing role during the East Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the Six-Party negotiations have further contributed to the Chinese clout in the region and in the peninsula. Thus, China has acquired a special role in determining the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula in recent times. The growing Chinese role in the Korean Peninsula emanates from its changed preferences and adjustment after the end of bipolarity and also from emerging new inter-state relations in and around Asia.

3 China-North Korea relationship during the Cold War era was characterized as a relationship of ‘lip and teeth’ and their alliance was considered to be ‘an alliance forged in blood.’ Thousands of the Chinese volunteers lost their lives fighting along with North Korean army in the Korean War 1950-53 and it made their relationship ‘special’ (International Crisis Group Asia Report 2006).
The Six-Party talks to denuclearise North Korea began only with the Chinese initiative (Snyder 2003). China offered its good offices in January 2003 to bring both- the US and North Korea, to the negotiation table (Scobell 2004b: 10-11). For the resolution of the nuclear issue, it hosted the Three-Party talks on April 23-25, 2003, in which the blue print of the Six-Party talks was prepared. China’s apprehension was that any nuclear provocation on the part of North Korea would provide impetus for Japanese attempt to acquire nuclear weapons and also justification for the proposed American TMD programme in the region.

Even though in the initial few rounds of the Six-Party talks, no substantive progress was made because of the US and North Korean inflexible stands, China sustained its efforts (Kang Won-sik 2004). When the talks were suspended for around thirteen months after the third round, China intervened actively and was able to bring back both Washington and Pyongyang in the negotiation process for the fourth round in September 2005, where a so-called ‘breakthrough’ was achieved (Mishra 2006). In the joint statement, North Korea agreed to fully dismantle its nuclear weapons programme and return to the NPT, whereas Washington also affirmed that it had no intention to attack or invade North Korea and would provide a security guarantee to this effect. Again a deadlock emerged after the emergence of the BDA issue. Even after the North Korean missile and nuclear tests, China along with South Korea, opposed any punitive measures on Pyongyang, proposed by Japan and seconded by the US in the UN Security Council. Finally, because of the Chinese insistence, the UNSC resolution 1718 did not include strong provisions against North Korea. China further made attempts to achieve common ground by again

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4 Washington alleged that the North Korean regime had been involved in drug trafficking and counterfeiting activities through the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia (BDA). Washington took the initiative to freeze North Korea’s account in the BDA which amounted to about $25 million (Joo Seung-ho and Kwak Tae-hwan (2007: 37-39).
persuading North Korea to participate in the second phase of the 5th round of negotiations and finally in December 2006, the talks were resumed in Beijing. All the parties involved in the negotiations expressed their desire to move forward by taking cognizance of recent developments, continuing to adhere to the framework of the joint statement made in September 2005. Probably, Washington also realized that situation could also become unmanageable if it would not budge from its coercive policy. In the third phase of the 5th round talks, which was held from 8 to 13 February 2007, finally a roadmap of North Korea's denuclearisation was agreed upon in accordance with the provisions of the September 2005 Joint Statement.

The agreement was considered to be a milestone in the process of North Korea's denuclearisation and it appeared that it was only a matter of time when the objective of nuclear weapons free Korean Peninsula would be achieved. Amidst the euphoria, the first phase of 6th round of the Six-Party talks began in mid-March 2007. Although, US negotiator Christopher Hill announced that the North Korean money frozen in the BDA would be released soon, North Korea made it a precondition for the talks. The North Korean negotiator said that implementation of the first phase of the February 13 Agreement would only begin after the actual arrival of the money in North Korea. Thus another recess time was taken and the talks were only resumed in mid-July after release of North Korean money from the BDA, through a Russian Bank in June 2007. On July 14, 2007, North Korea declared the closure of its Yongbyon facility. Not only did the IAEA inspectors verify this, but New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters, during a visit to Pyongyang, affirmed on November 18th that North Korea was sincerely working to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme (The International Herald Tribune, 17 November 2007). Although, the key role played by China as neutral arbitrator in the talks has been able to sustain the negotiation process, yet the delay in the implementation process by North Korea, because of the US inflexibility and a government change in South Korea, has created doubts about the success of the talks.
China has been trying to utilise the new opportunities to emerge as the most important regional player in not only the Northeast Asia but in the Asia as a whole. There are definite signs that international relations in Asia would develop around China and it has been re-emerging as the main gravitational factor in the East Asia (Kang David C. 2003: 67, Acharya 2003-04). Under the Chinese leadership, a hierarchical relationship among the countries of Asia has been emerging (Acharya 2003-04: 154). Beijing, in the changed international system, has been completely focused on not only on its economic development but also on its 'peaceful rise' (heping juequi) and accordingly Chinese influence in the peninsular affairs has grown in the post-Cold War era (Lee Hee-ok 2005). China has been able to transcend its alliance with North Korea by forging an understanding with South Korea as well as Japan, without fully abandoning its Cold War ally North Korea. The change is quite significant for the future security scenario of the peninsula and popular support for closer ties with China in South Korea could affect the Korean security calculus in a very fundamental way.

Undoubtedly, the Six-Party talks constitute a multilateral forum to address the security issue of the Korean Peninsula as well as Northeast Asia region. However, it is still in its nascent stage and it would take serious efforts on the part of regional players to consolidate it properly. The talks merely suggest a framework which might or might not emerge as multilateralism in East Asian region in future (Fukuyama 2005) but essentially the Six-Party talks represent a strong and unprecedented assertion of Chinese diplomatic prowess, which has been responsible for initiating this multilateral forum to which the US has acceded. While examining the deliberations of the various rounds of talks in Beijing, it becomes quite obvious that at one level, these talks are essentially posited in a Chinese arrangement for bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang and if both the US and North Korea could not agree to negotiate bilaterally within the multilateral framework, the talks have no future. These talks were not directly meant to initiate a new phase of multilateralism in East Asia from the very beginning. It is important to note that
North Korea had been demanding bilateral talks with the US and the Bush administration was unwilling to talk with the ‘rogue states’.

The absence of multilateralism in East Asia could be traced back to the Cold War years when horizontal relations and communications were absent or very limited among the East Asian countries (Cumings 2008). Most of the countries of the region had their dealings with the US bilaterally and relations of regional countries were allowed to the extent US regional strategy permitted them. Even though with the end of the Cold War, business interactions among the regional countries have increased greatly to the extent that there could be study about inter-Korean trade, on political and strategic affairs, still they interact with one another mostly via Washington.

The Six-Party talks could be perceived only as a beginning of multilateralism in the region but the process has not arrived yet (Park John S. 2005). There is still a semblance of the old Cold War rivalry between the two virtual-alliances in the region. Earlier, when the three-party preparatory meetings between the representatives of China, North Korea and the US were held in China in March 2003, the talks were conceptualised as a five-party talks, not including Russia (Zherin 2005: 143). However, reportedly North Korea insisted on including Russia in the negotiation process on the assumption that it would have China and Russia, two former allies on its side against the US, Japan and South Korean participation in the talks.

Thus, even though the official positions of the old virtual-alliance partners proved not to be in full agreement with one another till date and often there have been five versus one negotiations, the old division and framework of two virtual-alliances negotiating with each other has not died down completely. Such perceptions make it quite clear that the Six-Party talks could not be understood as a real beginning of multilateralism in Northeast Asia. Notwithstanding the Joint Working Groups on regional cooperation, actual negotiations have made it clear that the process falls short of beginning of multilateralism in the region and, for near
future Korean, the security paradigm has to grapple with the absence of any such arrangement.

The Six-Party talks have also been important because they underline the growing role of China in the emerging multilateralism in Northeast Asia. The talks which were conceived and facilitated by China, represent growing prowess and stature of China in the region as it could play an interlocutory role in the bilateral relations of regional countries with the US. More specifically, it represents China’s increasing role in determining the security architecture of the Korean Peninsula and the region by persuading North Korea and the US to participate in the negotiations.

**Increasing Significance of China**

Although the Cold War security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula, which was constituted on the basis of bipolarity of international system, is not fully dismantled in the changed international circumstances, the role of China has changed significantly. From the mid-1980s, China realised that the bipolar contest between the USSR and US had been tilting in favour of Washington because of a variety of reasons including military edge of the US. China perceived that the trend would continue in the next decade and beyond (Garret and Glaser 1986: 286) and contemplated its future policy for a more diversified Asia, even if, we assume that it did not think about an emerging multipolar world (Godwin 1994: 172). Thus, in 1985, the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party started pondering over a critical change in the strategic guidance of People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Among other specific guidance, the CMC recommended to be prepared for local limited wars around China’s border which would be the most likely form of conflicts in the foreseeable future (FBIS-China, 18 February 1986: W11-12). The ‘strategic shift’ in Chinese policy was posited in the understanding that there had been a shift in the global power balance.
China perceived that the American covert objective to build a post-Cold War collective security system would be basically a ‘new hegemonism’ of the US in the international system (Jirong 1991: 5). China started repositioning itself against the challenges coming from a growing American ‘hegemony’ in Asia (Jirong 1991: 4). China realised that more than competing with the US in the military area, it would be essential to increase its comprehensive strength by improving its economic, technological and scientific capabilities which would provide Beijing an edge over Washington in Asia. China outlined that unlike territorial, ethnic and religious disputes in Europe and the Middle East, the Chinese neighbourhood would be relatively stable and have greater potential for economic cooperation.  China ventured into its ambitious and oft-repeated ‘peaceful rise’ project by engaging most of its neighbouring countries, including India in the post-Cold War era. China also realised that growing tension on the Korean Peninsula between the two regimes of the peninsula, further aggravated by the North Korean nuclear programme, would be harmful for the Chinese strategic interests in the region and its ‘peaceful rise’ project.

It was a tough challenge for China to enter into mutually productive economic interactions with South Korea, keeping North Korean nuclear issue under control and at the same time, maintain its strategic partnership with North Korea. Although, America wanted to prevent development of a strategic ‘empty space’ in Asia by reassuring its allies and pledging for more active presence in case of any regional contingencies (Solomon 1992: 442), China anticipated the emergence of this void. It started working to fill it up in a non-military and constructive manner, though it kept on denying its intention.  Gradually, the Chinese intention became apparent and its attempt to utilise coming opportunities in the non-bipolar world brought it face to face with the US. The contest between China and the US in the East Asia and on the Korean Peninsula was quite obvious when Washington stated

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5 In June 1992, the then Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen expressed this idea at the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs and in May 1992, the official newspaper of the PLA, Liberation Army Daily expressed similar opinion.
6 In the post-ministerial meeting of ASEAN in July 1992, Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, outrightly refuted the allegation that China had been trying to ‘fill up the vacuum’ created by the end of Cold War bipolarity.
that one of its post-Cold War objectives was to ‘discourage the emergence of a regional hegemon’ in the East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI), though without naming China (President Report 1992).

The covert or overt regional rivalry between the US and China after the end of global bipolarity brought changes and readjustment in the Chinese foreign policy priorities in the region. However, the US remained fixed to its conventional model of the Cold War era-regional alliance and military presence in the region to ensure peace and security. In contrast, China started to bring multilateral diplomacy and a new security concept7 of ‘strategic partnerships’ in the region based on its alleged ambition of the ‘return to the middle kingdom’ (Shambaugh 2005: 25).

The new strategic orientation in Chinese foreign policy was based on the assumption that a new regional order in Northeast Asia after the end of bipolarity was imminent. To cope with the changes, gradually, it shifted its policy of one-Korea to a de facto two-Korea policy in the mid-1980s. Chinese military aid to North Korea also declined and it was confirmed in the South Korean White Paper of 1990 where South Korea admitted that ‘China stopped supplying arms to North Korea in the mid-1980s as part of its policy of encouraging military stability on the peninsula’ (The ROK Defense White Paper 1991). China gradually moved towards a de jure two-Korea policy and played the most critical role in persuading North Korea to enter simultaneously with South Korea in the United Nations in 1991 (Lee Chae-jin 1996: 70-72 and 121-122, Kim Samuel S. 2002: 379). Finally, China normalised its relationship with South Korea in 1992.

The new Chinese approach towards the Korean peninsula has paid huge dividends in their economic exchanges. The bilateral trade between China and South Korea, which was $5.8 billion in 1991, reached beyond $130 billion in 2006.

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However it would be inappropriate to look at Chinese shift only through the prism of economic benefits. It was part of its policy shift in the changing dynamics of the post-Cold War world. China’s less doctrinaire approach to the Korean Peninsula has been part of the Chinese reorientation of its policy to grab the new opportunities, which emerged from the end of global bipolarity. In the short run, China was concerned about a possible ‘explosion and implosion’ of North Korea which would have a destabilising effect on the region and on the Chinese goal of ‘peaceful rise’ (Hyland 2006, Scobell 2001: 19-20). Chinese shift has been gradual and consistent and though apparently it endorses a ‘nuclear weapon free’ Korean Peninsula, it supports only diplomatic means to arrive at the goal.

Throughout the years of ‘first nuclear crisis’ on the peninsula, China maintained its commitment to North Korea and insisted on a policy of constructive engagement with it. In the Four-Party talks, which began in 1996, Beijing tried to project itself as an ‘honest broker’ in the inter-Korean interactions. It made it clear to North Korea that it could not support Pyongyang militarily in all the eventualities on the peninsula, especially if it emanated from the aggressive behaviour and adventurism of North Korea (Scobell 2001: 19-20). It is notable that during the Four-Party talks, on the one hand it opposed North Korean proposal to include North Korean-US peace treaty in the agenda, on the other hand, it also did not support South Korean proposal of inclusion of discussion over tension reduction and confidence building measures in the talks (Kim Samuel S. 2001: 395).

North Korea overtly expressed its displeasure with the Chinese shift and their relationship was strained in the process. When China demanded payment in hard currency from Pyongyang in their bilateral trade, North Korea considered it tantamount to abandoning old relations with an ally (Kim, Samuel S. and Tai-hwan Lee 2002: 126). Furthermore, after the death of Kim Il-sung, foreign policy interests

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8 The first nuclear crisis refers to revelation about North Korean plutonium based nuclear clandestine programme in late 1980s. After the photographs were released from the US satellites, the issue became very contentious. The first episode of the crisis reached its zenith in 1993 when North Korea threatened to walk out of the NPT. Finally, the issue subsided after signing of a Nuclear Accord between the US and North Korea in late 1994.
of China and North Korea became more irreconcilable. The strained relationship got reflected in less number of mutual visits of leaders of the two countries. For more than a decade no summit meet between the leaders of both the countries took place (Kim Tae-ho 1999: 306-308). In contrast, many important leaders of China and South Korea visited each other and all the seven members of Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party visited Seoul in this period.

Though the process of improvement in the China-South Korea relations continues, China persists to emphasise that even though it had developed a ‘close’ relationship with South Korea in recent years, its relationship with North Korea was still ‘special’, which is often dubbed as ‘brotherhood’ (xiongdi zhi bang) based on historical solidarity, cultural affinity and ideological similarity’ (Chung Jae-ho: 2006: 208). China attempted to create a balance in its dealings with North and South Korea and increasingly it had sought role of the most important arbitrator on the Korean issue. To balance its policy towards the Korean Peninsula, China continued to support North Korea in the light of few unexpected developments in regional and world politics. In the late 1990s, a new principle of ‘interventionism’ by the US was promulgated when the United Nations was bypassed by NATO. In the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo, the Chinese embassy was ‘mistakenly’ bombed which further aggravated the issue (Deng 2008: 10-11). In another unpleasant development, new Guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation were issued and Japan expressed its willingness to cooperate with the US Theatre Missile Development Programme in the region, though the target of such a programme was North Korea’s ‘rogue’ behaviour (Johnston 2006: 139, Moltz and Mansourov 2000: 108).

These developments made China realize the significance of its relations with Pyongyang. In April 1999, the then 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. 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.\textsuperscript{9} Chinese re-engagement with North Korea fortunately was not contrary to the South Korean engagement policy towards North Korea, initiated by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, known as the sunshine policy. China kept on encouraging South Korean sunshine policy and Chinese role in the summit meet between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il in June 2000 was significant. One month prior to the summit meet, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il visited Beijing. Apart from the South Korean offer, considerable encouragement and input from China were also instrumental in bringing Pyongyang out of shell in the form of its economic reform proposal in 2002.

However, the renewed Chinese efforts to again come closer to North Korea did not deviate from the Chinese post-Cold War strategy toward the Korean Peninsula to become a neutral arbitrator. China kept on negotiating with North Korea to abandon its nuclear and missile programmes along with its close cooperation with South Korea. For example, even though China tried to come closer to Pyongyang, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, during his visit to Washington in October 2002, said that China was ‘completely in the dark’ about the nuclear weapon programme of North Korea (The White House, October 2002) and openly supported attempts to denuclearize the peninsula (McVadon 2001: 173).

Putting aside politically controversial issues or downplaying them, China has improved its economic exchanges exponentially with South Korea in the post-Cold War era. China has become the largest trading partner of South Korea whereas South Korea has become 3\textsuperscript{rd} largest trade partner of China in a relatively short span of time. China has invited large number of South Korean students and in 2003, around 35,369 South Korean students were studying in China. Mutual exchanges in the field of culture between the two countries have also been remarkable. Whereas

\textsuperscript{9} In the joint statement there was clear indication that China has been working to balance its approach towards the Korean Peninsula in last few years. China was not very active in the Korean affairs during the signing of a nuclear accord between the US and North Korea in October 1994. It also did not participate in the implementation part of the accord and Chinese disinterest towards North Korea was considered as its growing distance with North Korea.
Chinese media and popular culture have been reaching the Korean shores, Korean cultural wave *Hallyu* has also its strong presence in China.\(^{10}\)

Chinese stature also got a substantial boost during the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, when China showed a responsible and stabilising role by not devaluing its currency and generously assisting the affected countries. In a significant step, China also favoured dismantling of the alliances which were product of the Cold War international politics. It includes the bilateral alliances of the US-Japan and the US-South Korea in East Asia. China embarked upon a comprehensive policy to strengthen its position in Asia by constructively participating in regional organisations, improving bilateral relations, enhancing economic ties, removing or minimising issues of mistrust in the security sphere (Shambaugh 2005: 29).

There have been regular visits between Chinese and South Korean officials and inter-government level exchanges and trust have improved significantly. In 2002, more than one million South Koreans visited China and around half million Chinese went to South Korea. The Chinese strategy to build strong ties with South Korea is born not only out of economic motive, but also due to strategic calculus (Shambaugh 2005: 34). China has been working to minimise any potential threat from the South Korea-US alliance by establishing close relationship with South Korea in all possible spheres.

Chinese constructive efforts in the Korean Peninsula were evident when, despite opting out of the implementation mechanism of the US-North Korea Nuclear Accord of 1994, promised to support it from outside. China did not became member of the Korean Peninsula Energy Developmental Organisation (KEDO) but it remained a supporter of the process and encouraged North Korea to defuse the nuclear issue in 1994 and the missile issue in 1999 and provided constructive advice.

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\(^{10}\) Recently, Korean cultural products like music, film, TV drama etc. have become popular in various Asian countries. The phenomenon is termed as Korean cultural wave (*hallyu*) and there are studies that assume that it would be able to change Korean image in the region and beyond and would provide a good opportunity to South Korea to emerge as a “soft power” in Asia (Cho Hae-joang 2005, Kim Jeong-mee 2007).
on economic reforms in North Korea. China also adopted a balanced and fair stance in the Four Party Talks convened to resolve the Korean problem (Yuan 2003).

Chinese attempt to reach closer to South Korea also got a major boost after the coming of two successive progressive governments in Seoul under the leadership of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun since 1998. The change of government in South Korea and their disagreement with the Republican administration in Washington provided China a golden opportunity to come further close to South Korea on strategic issues. For South Korea also, it was a phase of seeking more autonomy in foreign policy making. For example, earlier also South Korea took few initiatives to engage North Korea, but those initiatives were broadly pursued under the American policy towards North Korea and the region.

The changed domestic scenarios of South Korea and the US, as well as growing anti-Americanism in South Korea, seriously affected their bilateral alliance, partnership and priorities. Anti-Americanism grew in South Korea as a consequence of the wide spread feeling both at the level of government and the people that the US was more concerned about its own regional objectives and its 'tough' approach toward North Korea was a product of the inability of the new American administration to understand the nuances of the Korean problem (Kim Seung-hwan 2002-03, Cumings Meredith Woo 2003, Manyin 2003, Chung Jae-ho 2003). The growing gap between the US and South Korea brought China closer to Beijing and it was said that 'no nation has been as receptive to China as South Korea, where China has managed to win the hearts of many, the elite and public alike' (Chung Jae-ho 2001, Watts 2002). (See Table 5.1 and 5.2)

12 The opinion polls in the study have been used to corroborate the argument and not to prove it, as there could be problems of methodology, sample size and sample selection in these polls.
Table 5.1: Public Perceptions of China and the US in South Korea, 1996-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chose China</th>
<th>Chose US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chung, Jae-ho 2007: 99

Table 5.2: Perceptions towards the US and China in South Korea (2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favourable</th>
<th>Unfavourable</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


US Policy and the Korean Peninsula

In contrast to China, the US has had quite a different understanding of the reality of the post-Cold War era in the Northeast Asia and Korean Peninsula. The US strategy pertaining to Korean Peninsula initially did not take sufficient cognizance of changing posture of China, which went beyond the Cold War virtual-alliance structure and established formal relations with South Korea. The US perceived the end of bipolarity as beginning of an era where Washington would be the only superpower of the world. To assume this role, it kept on working with its old allies, though in a more distanced manner, and it waged a war against those states which were following their own independent path and not ready to accept American dictates.

Thus, its new approach towards Korean Peninsula did not move away from old one- South Korea as allied power and North Korea as adversary, except it became softer on its alliance commitment to South Korea and tougher on the adversary North Korea. The US policy also got mixed up in the Korean Peninsula when it linked other issues such as threat reduction, humanitarian consideration and nuclear and missile non-proliferation to its foreign policy goals in the peninsula (Manning 2002: 61). For the US, North Korea was the ‘last residue of the Cold War’ and North Korean ‘menace’(Cha Victor D. and Kang David C. 2003: 118) assumed another dimension with its nuclear and missile programmes, though it also appears
to be weak as its Cold War allies—China and the USSR appeared to have distanced themselves from it.

In the beginning of the post-Cold War era, it appeared that Washington was also interested in forging workable relations with North Korea and in May 1988, Washington took few ‘baby steps’ for cross-recognition of Pyongyang. However, the process could not be sustained because of various conditionalities put on North Korea such as renunciation of terror-tactics, cooperation in recovering US soldiers form the Korean War, addressing human rights concerns, improving North-South dialogue and compliance with IAEA obligations.

The issue got further complicated with the emergence of North Korean nuclear issue on the peninsula. The US tried to dissuade North Korea from going nuclear by announcing in September 1991 that it had unilaterally withdrawn all tactical nuclear weapons from the peninsula and ready to deal with North Korea through international organisations and multilateral mechanism. North Korea, which was in search for allies in the changed regional equations, wanted to bilaterally deal with the US. Furthermore, all the American attempts to denuclearise North Korea were considered by North Korea as measures to weaken the communist regime. It could not overlook American broader policy to defeat communism across the globe. In 1990, American Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard H. Solomon described the North Korean nuclear problem as ‘the number-one threat to Asian security’ (Solomon 1990).

After a serious phase of crisis, finally an accord was concluded between the US and North Korea in 1994 which provided a framework for dismantlement of North Korean nuclear programme, but mistrust between the two countries remained intact. The US policy vis-à-vis North Korea was pronounced in various policy declarations, including the Global Posture Review, East Asian Strategic Review and Quadrennial Defense Reviews. In the EAS Review, Washington contemplated its policy measures for the contingencies in the two war zones—Middle East and Northeast Asia. American approach towards North Korea gradually became less
popular in South Korea which was moving toward an option of engaging North Korea for resolution of pending issues such as inter-Korea rapprochement, denuclearisation, opening of North Korean economy and others (Kim Myung-seop 2001).

After the election of Republican President George W. Bush in America, American policy towards North Korea became tougher. From the very beginning, Republicans were against any deal with North Korea on the nuclear issue and argued for a tougher posture. In contrast, President Kim Dae-jung government in South Korea was in favour of an engagement policy towards North Korea. A mismatch between the policies and priorities of Washington and Seoul further weakened American position in the Korean Peninsula and provided an opportunity to China to play critical role in the process. (See Table 5.3)

Table 5.3: Differences of priorities between South Korea and the US on key security issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View North Korea as a great or moderate danger [a]</th>
<th>South Koreans</th>
<th>Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great danger</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate danger</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View terrorism as a very big or moderately big problem [b]</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately big problem</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very big problem</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favour US war on terrorism [a]</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with US military action in Afghanistan [c]</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe military action in Iraq justified [d]</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: [a] Pew Center for People and the Press, June 2003.  

Actually, the US policy towards Pyongyang was based on the assumption that North Korea was going to collapse sooner or later. Rather than providing it breathing space, efforts were needed to be made to hasten the process. Two other
important players in Korean affairs, China and South Korea had quite opposite views. South Korea, especially, was of the view that North Korea was not likely to collapse soon. Thus, it suggested to devise mechanisms to deal with North Korea, reform North Korea, and prepare it for a long-term unification. Chinese position vis-à-vis North Korea was quite close to this assumption or at least not against Chinese priorities for the region. Before the ‘second nuclear crisis’ of the peninsula, the US isolation in the Korean affairs became obvious when anti-Americanism grew in South Korea remarkably. Whereas, Washington was considered to be not sufficiently sensitive toward Seoul’s delicate situation, Chinese constructive behaviour was well-appreciated in South Korea.

**Convergence of the US and China**

Chinese position and role has taken a shift in the Korean Peninsula and in determining the security paradigm of the Korean Peninsula. The changed Chinese role in the Korean security affairs could be contributed to the changed bipolarity of the international system and consequently conscious Chinese attempt to utilise the opportunities in Asia. China, though considered to be close to North Korea, has been able to establish close relations with South Korean in not only economic field but also on various political and strategic issues. China is considered to have acquired leverage over both North and South Korea in the post-Cold War era. However, it does not mean that the US influence in the security affairs of the peninsula has been reduced with the coming in of China. Although, there have been some instances of Anti-Americanism in South Korea and sometimes differences in the policies and priorities of Washington and Seoul, still both the countries continue to be close to each other in changed scenario. Korea still continues to have bilateral security alliance with the US in the changed scenario.13

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13 Even if it has not been a zero-sum game, ‘Washington has paid special attention to a possible connection between “China fever” and the upsurge of anti-Americanism sentiment in South Korea in recent year’ (Chung Jae-ho 2005: 151).
In South Korean policy, though, there are few signs of readjustment which might result into ‘some sort of realignment, it is not likely to occur in the near future’ (Chung Jae-ho 2005: 152). With the coming of progressive governments in South Korea under the leadership of President Kim Dae-jung in 1998 and Republican government in Washington under the leadership of George W. Bush, there were signs of growing gap between the US and South Korea. The process became obvious when a summit meet between the leaders of North and South Korea was held in June 2000, even without any support from the US. The trend of Japan and South Korea showing increasingly reconciliatory approach towards North Korea continued till the eruption of North Korean Uranium based nuclear programme in the late 2002. In spite of serious reservations on Washington’s part in April 2002, South Korea decided to work along with North Korea on the proposal of railroad links and for the development of an industrial zone at Kaesong in North Korea. For the establishment of the industrial zone, approval of the US was required to de-mine a small portion of Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which Washington was not ready to provide. Finally, South Korean President Kim Dae Jung personally appealed George W. Bush to give an affirmative node and on September 12, 2002, the US reluctantly gave its approval to de-mine the area.

In another incident, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi went to Pyongyang on an official visit on September 17, 2002. It is said that Japan had been negotiating with North Korea about this visit for more than nine months, whereas, the US came to know about the visit only three weeks before it took place. Japan did not take prior consent of the US for the visit and it only informed about the pre-determined visit to Washington. It was an unprecedented step on the part of Japan in the more than fifty years of its alliance with the US. The US Assistant Secretary of State, James Kelly, presented evidence of North Korean uranium enrichment programme by travelling to Japan. However, Koizumi went ahead with his visit as scheduled. During Koizumi visit, another unprecedented thing occurred when North
Korean leader Kim Jong-il openly admitted the incident of kidnapping of Japanese for spying purposes and directly apologized to Koizumi.

Thus, at one point of time, there was a phase when Washington’s influence in the matrix of Korean security paradigm declined and the US was feeling left out from the developments in the Northeast Asia, particularly after inter-Korean summit meet in June 2000 (Calder 2001). For a short while, Washington felt that the peninsular politics had taken its own autonomous momentum and Bush administration ‘saw a real possibility that its options on the (Korea) peninsula would increasingly be driven by the policy agendas of others’ (Harrison 2005: 102). However, the ‘second episode’ of nuclear crisis on the peninsula restored Washington’s lost significance in the process. South Korea and Japan both realised that it would not be easy to move away from their time-tested alliance with the US.

The reason for dilution of the US-South Korea alliance being a remote possibility could be explained by bringing the issue of identity, which have been discussed in the previous chapter. The US and South Korea enjoy not only strong military linkages but also economic and other interdependence which can not be scraped overnight. The close exchanges between the two countries since the Korean War make it difficult for both of them to abandon each other. For example, both the countries have been negotiating the transfer of war time control to South Korea; still the process has been domestically contentious, financially expensive and logistically difficult. (See, Table 5.4 and 5.5)

Table 5.4: South Koreans’ Opinions about future relations with the US and China, 1997 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weaken Relationship</th>
<th>Maintain Status quo</th>
<th>Strengthen Relationship</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With the US</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With China</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sejong Survey 1997, 12
Table 5.5: South Koreans’ Opinions as whether the US or China is more important, 2004 (By age group) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>*The US</th>
<th>**China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20s</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40s</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50s</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The US might differ from the last two South Korean administrations on the priorities and policies vis-à-vis North Korea, but it knows that its presence in Korean affairs is primarily through Seoul. Furthermore, a round of conciliation and coordination between their policies would again bring back both countries close to each other. It could happen with the change in governments in Washington and Seoul or if North Korean brinkmanship or threat grows significantly. With coming of new President Lee Myung-bak of the Grand National Party (GNP) in power in February 2008, there are signs that a close understanding between Washington and Seoul has been re-evolving.

On the other hand, after various ups and downs, Washington has not been able to develop any mechanism to deal with North Korea in a more sustained manner. There are opinions that the US is still stuck to its Cold War era goal of the ‘end of North Korea’ (Eberstadt 1999). So, at present, the US has been narrowly focused on dismantling Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programmes and has not given sufficient thought over the possibilities of survival of the North Korea regime in long-term. North Korea, apparently considers dealing with Washington bilaterally,\(^{14}\) as part of its attempt to acquire legitimacy vis-à-vis South Korea. Although, the multilateral negotiations in the form of the Six-Party talks have been working on denuclearisation of North Korea and also evolve some kind of long term

\(^{14}\) North Korea does not only want to deal with the US directly on political issues but also wants to have bilateral military talks as well. For example, in July 2007 North Korea military proposed direct talks with its US counterpart. “North Korean Military Wants to Talks to U.S.,” available at http://www.npr.org/blogs/news/2007/07/north_korean_military_wants_to.html
multilateral security mechanism for the region in long term, still the two key players of the talks have been the US and North Korea. North Korean insistence on primarily dealing with Washington, South Korean difficulty to distance itself from the US, and the US inflexible approach vis-à-vis the changed reality of post-bipolar world and North Korean survival, seem to be responsible for Washington remaining as an important players in the security paradigm of the Korean peninsula. The importance of Washington in the constitution of Korean security paradigm would also be crucial in near future as still there is a wide gap between the military, economic and political capabilities of Washington and Beijing. Although Chinese rise along with its constructive and balanced approach in Korean politics might have brought China in a more significant way in the process, still it would be premature to assume that it has replaced or would be able to replace Washington in near future.

Even the literature of international relations which talks about emergence of China as the centre of the hierarchical inter-state relations in the Asia does not assume decline of American influence (Kang David C. 2003). Growing influence of China in the Korean Peninsula could also be contributed to the soft issues, such as cultural proximity, historical linkages, issue of identity, and more significantly economic benefits of interacting with China. China has been culturally quite close to Korea and historically they had suzerainty relations with Korea, in which China was a patron state and Korea was a client state (Kim Samuel S. 2006: 48, Lee Chae-jin 1996: 1). Subconsciously, there is recognition of China being the ‘big brother’ in Korea and it might explain quite favourable response from South Korea towards China’s balanced role in Korean affairs, after the normalisation of its relations with South Korea. China also has no negative baggage of colonial history like Japan and it works in favour of making Chinese image non-threatening to South Korea. Another significant factor which has increased clout of China in the Korean affairs could be exponential improvement in their bilateral economic relations. The huge natural and human resources of China are complimentary to Korea’s advanced
technology and capital. The synergy of their relations has been responsible for their fast growing economic exchanges, even without external inducement.

In case of North Korea, China provides the most significant window to the communist regime to the outside world. Even if Pyongyang does not agree with Beijing on variety of issues, it would be suicidal for it to go away from China. There are few studies which doubt Chinese leverage over North Korea, probably these studies overlook North Korean compulsions. Since there is hardly any possibility for North Korea to forge even a workable relationship with the US, leave aside normalisation of the relations, it is quite improbable that North Korea reliance on China would diminish in near future. North Korea needs China more than China needs North Korea (Lee Chae-jin 2003: 237). Thus, it seems that China has quite strategically placed in the security and strategic calculus of both South Korea and North Korea. However, it does not seem directly infringe the US influence and significance for both the regimes on the peninsula. Thus, Korean security paradigm would not be characterised by zero sum calculation in near future. In case of China, even though its constructive approach and shift in foreign policy according to changed international and regional scenario has brought it more impressively and decisively in the matrix of Korean security, it would be inappropriate to say that it has eroded the role and significance of the US. The US is still one of the important players in Korean politics. There are strong indications that the trend would continue until something dramatic happens in the Korean politics such as reunification of the peninsula, escalation of tension between the two Koreas or beginning of another Korean War. Since these possibilities are very remote, it would be safe to assume that the trend would persist with some minor changes here and there.

Concluding Remarks

Emerging security architecture of Asia-Pacific with the rise of China, and resultant search for an alternative by the US in the form of exploring possibility of security
cooperation with Australia, Japan and India would have critical implication for
regional power balance and it would present an important source of new contour in
the security paradigm of Korean Peninsula. A nascent, but promising prospect of
regionalism and multilateralism in Northeast Asia would also have a direct bearing
on the Korean Peninsula. Another important emerging contour for the Korean
security paradigm could be emanating from resultant Chinese posture and its
relations with the US in future. However, till now both the US and China have been
able to refrain from direct confrontation and appear to project their efforts to
strengthen their relations with regional players as a non-zero-sum game.

The Neorealist assumption that international systemic change would bring
change in inter-state relations are partially true in analysing the Korean security
paradigm in the post-Cold War era, as it explains the sustained US role and
significance in Korean affairs. Similarly, the variables of the Constructivist theory
such as culture, historical issues, identity and economic benefits had also shaped the
Korean security paradigm and the Chinese growing influence could be better
explained by using these variables. Thus, by using the Neorealist and Constructivist
theories both, the trend of non-zero-sum game between the Chinese and American
influence in the Korean security affairs could be understand more appropriately.

The structural reasons as well as ‘soft issues’ both have been responsible for
bringing in China more significantly in the Korean security matrix. Above
discussion also reveals that the emergence of multilateralism, if and when it happens,
in the region would have significant implication for the security paradigm of the
Korean Peninsula and multilateral talks in the form of the Six-Party talks provide an
important point of departure in this regard. It provides a multilateral platform for
bilateral negotiations on the issue of regional implication and represents a shift and
increased role of China in determining Korean security environment.