REASSESSMENT OF SOUTH KOREAN ENGAGEMENT POLICY TOWARDS NORTH KOREA UNDER KIM DAE JUNG AND ROH MOO HYUN

Dr. Om Prakash Kumar House No.-101, 2nd Floor, Gali no.-15, Wazirabad Extention, New Delhi, 110084 Email id- omkorjnu@gmail.com

When Korean peninsula was partitioned in 1948, for more than two decades South Korea did not accept the very existence of North Korea. Initially South Korea asserted that it alone was the legitimate government on the Korean Peninsula, and the governments from South Korean part focused their efforts on preventing international recognition of the North Korea. Later even they dropped these efforts and continued to place primary emphasis on developing the South Korean economy, rather than on interacting with Pyongyang, so as to create the necessary means to ultimately achieve victory over the regime in North Korea. South Korea's economic growth played an important role in changing its approach towards North Korea. South Korean leaders also continued to denounce North Korea's Communist system, while placing priority on countering actual and potential North Korean acts of aggression. Every regime in the South Korea has put emphasis on peaceful coexistence with the North. They proposed a summit and suggested that separated families should be rejoined, along with promotion of economic exchange. Since the Park Chung Hee regime, every administration has proposed engagement policies. But the purpose, intention, and contents of the engagement policies before the 1990s differed. In order to understand the characteristics of relationship between South and North Korea, it can be divided into two regimes namely; the regime of conservative party leaders and the regime of progressive party leaders. The major differences between both the regimes was their ideological thoughts in respective of their policy towards North Korea. The leaders like Kim Dae Jung government and Roh moo hyun were the prominent leaders of conservative regime of South Korea.

There were dynamic changes in the relationship of South Korea and North Korea under these two government. It started changing mainly because of reasons like the wealth gap between North and South and South Korea's transition into democratization. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the relations between South and North Korea were stable due to democratically elected leaders, who were having high rate of supporters. It created enormous trust in the North Korean leadership. After the interaction of several high-level officials and leaders, the relationship between South and North got new dimension, which was different from the conventional strategies of engagement. Kim Dae Jung's government completely rejected the assumption of previous government which stated that "North Korea will not change". He adopted a new assumption that "the North will change". This shift of idea enabled Kim Dae Jung government not to visualize North Korea not as an object of confrontation, which can pose threat to the South. With the assumption of presidency by Kim Dae Jung on February 25, 1998, it became inevitable that the relations between two Koreas would come to the forefront of political debate in South Korea. Even prior to the becoming president, Kim Dae Jung issued public appeals for writing chapter of relationship with North Korea. He was determined to bring improvement in Inter-Korean relations. He developed a new kind of engagement policy which came to be known as "Sunshine Policy". The policy was based on the formula of three principle and three stages of unification process. These three principals were named as "peaceful coexistence, peaceful exchange, and peaceful unification". The three stages were defined as "the union of the republic (or the) state, the union of federalism and complete unification". In promulgating the Sunshine policy, kim Dae Jung declared three rules: (1) any kind of armed provocations will not be tolerated; (2) there would be no attempt to harm or absorb North Korea; (3) to push the process of reconciliation and cooperation on high rate. The first rule maintained that despite the engagement approach toward North Korea, South Korea will maintain a strong deterrent force. The second rule maintained that South Korea will promote peaceful coexistence and pursue unification in a peaceful manner. Third rule maintained that South Korea will try to build trust between the two Koreas through the process of reconciliation and cooperation. The Sunshine policy had two policy principles and five implementation guidelines. The first principle was the separation of economics from politics to promote socio- economic and cultural exchanges between the two Koreas. This step taken by the Seoul signalled US, Japan that they can also

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improve their relations with the North in this expectation that the normalized relation with the North would also promote North Korea to enhance their relationship with the rest of world. This principle was also designed in a way to allow the private sector to make decisions on trade with and investment in North Korea. President Kim Dae Jung made this point very clear in his ceremonial address that South Korean business tycoons are looking for opportunities to invest in North Korea. The second policy principle was reciprocity. South Korea believed that North Korea will try to meet South Korea's efforts to improve the relations between two Koreas. However, this principle of reciprocity became difficult because North Korea did not reciprocate South Korea's efforts in order to improve the relationship. That is why Kim Dae Jung revised this principle to provide first and expect later‖ and named it comprehensive, flexible and strategic reciprocity. Kim Dae Jung believed that this policy would benefit both the nations in improving the relationship regardless of North Korea's uncooperative response. Kim Dae Jung excluded the humanitarian assistance from the reciprocity principle. Kim Dae Jung's government adopted five promulgation guidelines for the Sunshine policy: (1) to promote national security and the exchanges and cooperation between the two Koreas; (2) to create peaceful coexistence and the environment for North Korean reforms; (3) to promote common interest; (4) to adhere the principle of self-determination with seeking international support; and (5) there would be consensus between the two Koreas on each policy implementation. This policy culminated in June 2000, when Kim Dae Jung and kin Jong-Il participate in a summit meeting. This meeting was supposed to be a historical because it was the first meeting of both countries' administrators since the partitioned of the country. Both South and North made a joint declaration after the summit, which came to known as 6.15 declaration, which concluded with the following statements: (1) both countries became ready to enhance mutual understanding and for independently persuasion of peaceful unification; (2) both countries became agree to resolve the issues of separated- families; (3) both countries agreed to provide cooperation on socio-economic, cultural and sports activities; (4) both countries agreed to meet again in Seoul; (5) both countries agreed to cooperate to resolve the issues of armed provocations and to remove the issue of threat to war(Berry 2008). Further, to add momentum in the cooperation, the chairman of Hyundai Corporation, Chung Ju-Yung visited North Korea. On his trip he went North Korea with 500 heads of cattle on one hundred trucks as a gesture. He also showed his interest to develop Kumgang Mountain cruise/ tourism project. In November 1998, South Korean was allowed to visit North Korea for the first time since Korean War. Seoul helped North Korea by sending 200,000 tones of fertilizer amount of $50 million on April 25, 2002. In June 2003 both Korea agree to build an industrial Park in Kaesong, just located near the border line. It was based on the agreement that North Korea will allow South Korean enterprises to proceed production and transaction activities. These projects were expected to contribute significant revenue for cash-strapped North Korean economy. After the meeting held in 2000, both side agreed to reconnect the Kyongui (Seoul-Shinuiju) railroad, which was disconnected since the partition of country. After these consecutive summits meeting and gradual improvement in the relations of both Koreas had significant impacts on the South Korean perception of North Korea. a survey, which was conducted by South Korean government showed that 90% students of the South Korean high school and college welcomed North Korea as a neighbour. Many South Korean started looking Kim Jong-Il as a rational and pragmatic leader rather than a reckless, maniac individual. Many also started to regard North Korea as no longer a threat. Instead, South Korean started viewing North Korea as a poor cousin which was in dire need of food and economic assistance. Thus many South Korean started supporting the Sunshine policy. They argued that North Korea will not invade South Korea. This fundamental change in the threat perceptions of North Korea had significant implications on the future relations of two Koreas. But despite Seoul's massive efforts for cooperation, North Korea did not reciprocate. South Korean public started losing patience with these imbalanced arrangements. The Sunshine policy sparked strong public repercussions for providing unconditional aid to a seemingly ungrateful North Korea and consequently public support for the Sunshine policy declined over the time. Conservatives also added fuel in it stating that Sunshine policy is a unidirectional policy and asserted that unconditional provision of aid to the North was the wastage of resources because North Korea had no intention to cooperate. Later it was also revealed that Kim administration had paid North Korea $500 million for holding a summit

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meeting. This turned down the diplomatic achievement of Kim Dae Jung through Sunshine policy. It also tarnished the image of kim Dae Jung and its achievements.

In February 2003, Roh Moo Hyun was elected as South Korean president. When he came to the office, second North Korean nuclear crisis was escalating. He came into power with the strong support from the so-called 386 generation. The 386 generation was politically and socially liberal and did not accept the patron- client relationship with the United States. This generation looked North Korea from the compatriotic perspective. President Roh Moo Hyun shared the 386 generation's views and regarded North Korea as a weak state that was attempting to secure itself from the external security threats as best it could. He considered engaging North Korea would reduce its fears and help in transforming North Korea's society, which will finally lead both Koreas to the eventual unification. Roh administration focused on the peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas. He believed that it is better to take appropriate time to reunify the two Koreas after gradual process of economic and cultural integration. Accordingly, the Roh Moo Hyun government continued the framework of the sunshine policy with only adopting a different name "peace and prosperity policy". In an interview with time magazine in 2003, he maintained that "I don't think there is any reason to promote a different policy from the former president's policy and I will try to improve the implementation methodology by consulting with the opposition party and gaining the confidence of public". In other words, Roh Moo Hyun did not perceive that the Sunshine policy was failure to engage North Korea into dialogue and reduce the threat from the North Korea as well as engaging North Korea into process of unification.

Objective of the "Sunshine" and "Peace and prosperity" policy

Primarily, the both policies "Sunshine" and "Peace and Prosperity" were an attempt to engage North Korea in several ways to develop interdependence between the two Koreas, to promote internal changes and to reduce the threat from North Korean side. Apart from this, in comparison to previous South Korean policy, it was the South Korea's first policy efforts not based on a zero-sum mentality. With this policy, president Kim Dae Jung and the successive president Ron Moo Hyun put efforts with intention to communicate with North Korean leader, not with intention to absorb North Korea in any way and South Korea was willing to assist North Korea by providing economic aid and creating business-friendly environment in North Korea, a positive sum gain for both countries. It was the assumption of both leaders that economic interdependence in long run would facilitate the internal political changes, which would finally prepare roadmap for the unification of the two Koreas. But on the North Korean side, Kim Jong Il regime was only interested in receiving economic aid from South Korea rather than seeking mutual cooperation. Because of this, the Sunshine policy did not produce a tangible result and faced public criticism. This enforced Roh Moo Hyun to bring some changes in his engagement policy toward North Korea including putting option of public opinion in his main principle. These efforts put by the South Korean government indicated that South Korea was willing to utilize its economic wealth as an inducement to communicate with the North. But at the same time, South Korea was also expecting the North Korea's reciprocity, which South Korea did not receive. Nevertheless, these policies signalled a strong and confident South Korean leadership, which was quite different from all the previous government's policy in order to directly engage North Korea into dialogue.

Achievement of the "Sunshine" and "Peace and Prosperity" policy

First, when Kim Dae Jung became president of South Korea in 1998. Initially, one of the major challenge of his tenure was to get overcome the 1997 Asian financial crisis. He formulated Sunshine policy, which helped South Korea overcome its financial crises in a great way after the IMF bailout in December 1997. It also reduced the tension between the two Koreas by improving North-South relations. He created such a naïve situation in which private investors felt easy in their domestic market as well as in direct foreign investment.

Second, the Sunshine policy helped in strengthening the national security. One of this policy's three principles was "any kind of armed provocations from the North Korean side will not be tolerated" that destabilize the peace on Korean peninsula. The naval clash, which occurred on the Yellow Sea in mid-

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June 1999, was an armed provocation from the North Korean side. The South Korean navy firmly dealt with that armed provocation. This reaction from the South Korean side clearly conveyed a message that Kim Dae Jung's administration would not tolerate any armed provocations. And this solid step taken by South Korea clearly reduced the security-related tension between two Koreas.

Third, the Sunshine policy focused on reconciliation, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence between South and North. Practically, South Korea wanted to get overcome from the threat of war on the peninsula. What the subject had to be emphasized was to prepare the roadmap toward Inter-Korean rapprochement in the future time, which occurred as the irrevocable trend of the Post-Cold War period. The process of tension reduction and reconciliation in Korea went in tandem with the nature of Post-Cold War politics of irreversible flow of events.

Fourth, through the summit meeting and Joint Declaration in June 2000, both countries made a combined effort to promote their interests by actively taking part in the formulation of a new Asian regional order for the twenty-first century. Diplomatic history elucidates that if such international orders are once established that create structural constraints on smaller states for decades (or centuries) to come. Thus it is extremely prominent for the smaller states to grab any opportunity and use it to their privilege in order to live in the international arena. After the September 11 terrorist attack the Bush administration substantially narrowed the opportunity for Inter-Korean reconciliation (may be for short time). The Bush administration has focused its attention on the linkage between terrorist groups and its sponsors. The rationale behind this linkage was that the greatest threat comes to the US from transnational terrorists that will strike down with WMD without any warning. The continuous persuasion of nuclear weapons will keep either North Korea apart from the international arena or for living together North Korea has to abandon its nuclear weapons practices. And living as it is may lead to the collapse of North Korean regime. If North Korea agree to shake hand with South Korea, both Koreas will shape their own destiny in international arena.

Fifth, the Sunshine policy had established a solid framework for the reconciliation and peaceful unification of Korea. In June 2000, both Korean leaders realized that the unification of Korean peninsula cannot be completed in short span of life. It will be start as a process and will take almost a decade or more to achieve this and at a huge cost. On June 15, 2000 leaders of both countries made joint declaration a North South Joint Declaration and stated that there are some common elements in the South Korea's proposal for a confederation and also in the North Korea's proposal for a federation of a lower stage as the procedure for achieving reunification, both countries agreed to promote reunification in that direction. What was noteworthy in that summit meeting was the mutual acceptance of common elements to achieve their unification. These elements laid a basic foundation for promoting peaceful unification of Korean peninsula through dialogue and negotiations and by minimizing the hostilities and threat of war. This agreement is legally resist the idea of applying forces as a method of unification.

Sixth, the Sunshine policy did confined North Korea in some spheres. Cultural relations through social integration got accelerated after Kim Dae Jung's administration. North Korea participated in Busan Asian Games in 2002, unified team for Sydney and Athens Olympics revitalized the hope for amicable relations between both Koreas. Interesting observation in this social integration was that the South Korean government gave full support to North Korea's delegation including funding hotel and other expenses. So it was Sunshine policy which laid foundation for further development in relations between the both Koreas.

Finally, the Sunshine policy had strengthened the base of reconciliation forces in South Korean society and created a solid foundation for the amicable process of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas. Particularly, the Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) became the leading actors in this endeavour as the pro- reconciliation force and resistant against the anti-rapprochement elements both at domestic and abroad level. A conducted poll by the Joongang Ilbo in 2002 revealed that majority of South Koreans supported the Sunshine policy and its Inter-Korean reconciliation process and cooperation with North. As for the question, "Do you think that the next government should also continue the Sunshine policy should continue?" 34.5 percent of the taken survey answered that it "should continue", and the opinion of 53.7 percent was that it "should continue with modification".

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This means that opinion of a total of 88.2 percent of the conducted survey said that the next South Korean government should continue the Sunshine policy with only 9.7 percent opponent.

In 2003, President Roh Moo Hyun came to the power with the strong support of 386 generation, which was radically opponent of the US policy toward North Korea. Yet they were looking North Korea from compatriotic perspective. Roh government did not find any deficiency in Sunshine policy. He just focused on better implementation of this policy. So he took this policy forward by different name "Peace and Prosperity". The Roh government expanded its aid to North Korea. As results, According to the statistics from the ministry of unification, trade between both Koreas increased to $1.8 billion in 2007 from $724 million in 2003 at the beginning of the Roh government. Apart from it, economic aid and travel to the North Korea also increased. In 2002, the last year of the Kim Dae Jung administration, South Korea provided $322.6 million in economic aid, an amount that increased to $439.7 million by 2007, the last year of Roh administration. In addition, the number of workers at the Kaesong industrial park increased to 22,538 at the end of 2007 from a mere 2,000 in March 2005. In 2005, South Korea supplied $385 million worth of humanitarian assistance, including 500,000 tonnes of rice on a deferred payment arrangement. Reunions for separated families expanded as well, with more than 3,000 families reunited in 2003 alone.

On October 2, 2007, both sides leaders president Roh Moo Hyun and Kim Jong Il had a summit meeting in Pyongyang. On October 4, both signed a peace declaration which emphasized to develop a peace mechanism and promoting economic cooperation between the two Koreas. To this end, both sides called for international talks to roll back the current armistice and established permanent peace treaty. To strengthen economic ties, the two leaders accorded to set up a special economic zone in Haeju and open a joint fishing area close to the NLL in the disputed waters of the Yellow Sea. Moreover, South Korea also offered to reopen a railroad between Kaesong and Sinuiju and build and expressway between Kaesong and Pyongyang in addition to constructing a shipbuilding complex in Nampo. However, because of the escalation of the second Korean nuclear crisis and Pyongyang's lack of reciprocity, public support for the engagement policy began to wane, making it difficult for the Roh government to pursue further improvement.

Conclusion

Historically, it has been observed that the relationship between two Koreas has been problematic due to ideological dissimilarities. After the separation, North Korea made unsuccessful attack on South Korea, which causes the deterioration in the relationship. But South Korea's economic growth played a prominent role in changing its approach towards North Korea. South Korean leaders also continued to denounce North Korea's Communist system, while placing priority on countering actual and potential North Korean acts of aggression. Every regime in the South Korea has put emphasis on peaceful coexistence with the North. After the South Korea's transition to the democracy, South Korean leader made more bold approach towards North Korea for changing its behaviour. In this process of reconciliation with North Korea, the engagement policy based on functional theory led by Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun harnessed a big success in nullifying the intensified relations towards North Korea.

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