

The Perry Report and US-North Korea Relations¹

Reinhard Drifte

The Perry Report of 12 October 1999 has built a stronger foundation for the Agreed Framework of 1994 which aims at the elimination of North Korea's alleged nuclear weapons programme. This has been done by abandoning the initial premise that the North Korean regime would not last until the two Western Light Water Reactors would be completed in North Korea, by addressing the failure of the US to provide the incentives promised in the Agreed Framework, and by becoming more realistic about the constraints of any North Korea policy. However, the chances to carry through the Agreed Framework continue to be threatened by the wide discrepancy between North Korean and Western goals, by the US intention to deploy a Tactical Missile Defence system, and by difficulties of the US to maintain a common front with South Korea and Japan. The insistence of the US on greater North Korean reciprocity may also endanger the initial success of the Perry Report.

Introduction

The prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles has assumed an even greater importance for American foreign and security policy after the end of the Cold War than before. The end of the East-West confrontation has loosened the controls over several nuclear threshold countries as it has over their grievance that led them to consider the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq was defeated in its war of aggression against Kuwait, but the fight to end its ambition to acquire weapons of mass destruction has not yet ended. When the suspicions about a North Korean nuclear weapon programme hardened at the beginning of the 1990s, the US was close to consider the use of military strikes but the 1994 concluded Agreed Framework between the US and North Korea, facilitated by former US President Jimmy Carter's Pyongyang visit in June of that year, averted this possibility. However, by 1998 the implementation of the Agreed Framework had run into difficulties which resulted from continued suspicions about North Korea's nuclear intentions, its missile programme, the eroding US Congressional support for the deal with North Korea, and difficulties of coordination with the Republic of Korea and Japan. India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in 1998, introducing

¹ The article is based on a paper presented at the IISS workshop "Korea and the Changing Context of Northeast Asian Security" held on June 6th 2000 with the help of a grant from the Korea Foundation. The author wishes to express his gratitude to URENCO Ltd (Marlow, UK) for support of his research.