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## Sanctions and War on the Korean Peninsula

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Sanctions and War on the Korean Peninsula  
By Martin Hart-Landsberg and John Feffer

The risk of war on the Korean peninsula remains high, and the U.S. government is raising it higher by opening an economic front. In September 2005, one day after regional negotiations produced an agreement with the potential to defuse North Korean-U.S. tensions, the U.S. government charged North Korea with counterfeiting \$100 bills. Calling this alleged North Korean effort a direct attack on U.S. sovereignty and technically an act of war, Washington imposed an ever-tightening and ever-widening web of financial restrictions on the country.

Washington's economic gambit, launched in 2005 and strengthened by UN sanctions in 2006, raises questions concerning timing, threat escalation, morality, and efficacy. With no further rounds of multilateral talks currently planned, the hard-line economic approach toward North Korea has been a counterproductive detour from the more pressing issue of denuclearization and diplomatic normalization. The restrictions and sanctions have acted as too blunt a stick to push North Korea back to the negotiating table and have become instead the main stumbling block in the negotiations. Deployed as an alternative to the less palatable military approaches to regime change, the economic campaign proved counterproductive when the DPRK responded with its missile and nuclear tests. Finally, this economic approach undermines North Korean efforts at reforms and opening, the very process that many argue needs to be supported on moral, as well as strategic, grounds.

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