

# COMPARATIVE

---

## CONNECTIONS

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL  
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

**CHINA- KOREA RELATIONS**

### **CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS: ALLIANCE RESTORATION AND SUMMIT COMMEMORATIONS**

SCOTT SNYDER, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SEE-WON BYUN, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

South Korea President Moon Jae-in's meeting with Joe Biden and his participation in the G7 summit during May and June focused attention on Seoul's strategy of balancing relations with China and the United States. While Beijing disapproved of the US-ROK joint statement released after the May summit, Chinese state media praised the Moon administration's relative restraint in joining US-led coalition-building against China. Official remarks on core political and security issues, however, raised mutual accusations of interference in internal affairs. US-China competition and South Korean domestic political debates amplify Seoul's dilemma regarding its strategic alignment ahead of the country's 2022 presidential elections.

---

This article is extracted from *Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal of Bilateral Relations in the Indo-Pacific*, Vol. 23, No. 2, September 2021. Preferred citation: See-Won Byun, "China-Korea Relations: Alliance Restoration and Summit Commemorations," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp 93-102.

The China-North Korea relationship turned to commemorative diplomacy regarding summit meetings between Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping in 2018 and 2019 in the absence of new meetings in 2021. Kim offered hearty congratulations to Xi on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party and both sides affirmed the value and historic contributions of the Sino-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the treaty in 1961. Political messages underscoring China-North Korean strategic alignment included a North Korean statement affirming shared strategic priorities regarding both the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and Chinese statements criticizing the continuation of annual US-South Korean military exercises in the context of rising China-US strategic rivalry.

### **Moon's Summit Diplomacy Disappoints Beijing**

President Moon Jae-in held his first face-to-face summit with Biden in Washington amid what Korean analysts [called](#) “sharpening Sino-US competition that has added pressure on South Korea to make a choice.” The US-ROK [joint statement](#) on May 21 affirmed a “comprehensive alliance” and shared “vision for a region governed by democratic norms, human rights, and the rule of law at home and abroad.” Although the statement did not name China, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs [opposed](#) references to Taiwan, the South China Sea, and an envisioned international order framed by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and Indo-Pacific strategy. Moon and Biden were clearly “targeting China” according to PRC Ambassador to Seoul Xing Haiming, who voiced his disappointment at a forum marking the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 24, and media interviews in [May](#) and [June](#). While officials of the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs [downplayed](#) such references, local reporters questioned why there was no mention of human rights issues like Xinjiang and Hong Kong, as the US-Japan [joint statement](#) explicitly identified in April. Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong [assured](#) on May 25 that “In light of the special relationship between South Korea and China, our government has refrained from making specific comments about China's internal affairs.”

Anxieties persisted as Moon prepared to attend the G7 summit on June 11-13 as a guest along with

leaders of Australia, India, and South Africa. In telephone talks with PRC counterpart Wang Yi on June 9, Foreign Minister Chung [hoped](#) for the “stable development” of US-China relations, indicating that “cooperation between the US and China in responding to global challenges is in the interests of the international community.” The G7 [communique](#) on June 13 pledged to “consult on collective approaches to challenging non-market policies and practices” of China, urged China “to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms,” and emphasized a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” G7 members launched the [Build Back Better World \(B3W\)](#) initiative, “a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies” supporting US “strategic competition with China” according to the White House. In a June 22 report to the National Assembly on the G7 summit's outcome, the ROK foreign ministry [stated](#), “we seek to harmoniously develop the strategic cooperative partnership with China based on the South Korea-US alliance.”

### **South Korea's Balancing Act**

According to Chinese analysts like Cheng Xiaohe of Renmin University, the Biden-Moon summit [confirmed](#) “Seoul is balancing itself between Beijing and Washington.” The latest US-ROK statement “was the greatest consensus they can reach on China-related issues ... because South Korea needs the US for help in terms of COVID-19 vaccines and other issues.” China's state media tempered Beijing's disapproval by [describing](#) Moon as “rational and sober” as he faced US pressure given Korea's economic interests with China, affirming “South Korea will not meddle in China-US competition.” Chinese views of Moon's diplomacy with Western allies centered on Washington's “wedge” tactics, Seoul's restraint compared to Tokyo, and the US “Taiwan card.” As Lu Chao of Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences [claimed](#), “what the US really wants is to sow discord between China and South Korea.” Cheng Xiaohe similarly [argued](#) regarding the [termination](#) of the US-ROK Revised Missile Guidelines that “it cannot be ruled out that Washington aims to use the case to drive a wedge between Beijing and Seoul.” *Global Times* [insisted](#) “South Korea is much wiser than Japan in keeping a diplomatic balance,” pointing to South Korea's dependence on China for trade and Korean Peninsula issues. Commentaries on [May 21](#) and [May 22](#) focused primarily on South Korea's relative restraint on Taiwan, China's

“red line.” Compared to Japan, Moon’s balanced approach “is always the rational and pragmatic strategic choice for Seoul” according to Lu Chao.

South Korean observers questioned whether Seoul’s US-China strategy is sustainable. As a *Korea Times* editorial on Moon’s “diplomatic dilemma” [concluded](#) after his meeting with Biden, “South Korea finds it harder to keep balancing act.” The G7 summit [was](#) “a starting point for a new global order” showing both “South Korea’s enhanced prestige in the international community” and “growing US pressure on Seoul to join its global coalition against China.” Conservative voices [identified](#) the summit’s goal as “finding effective ways for leaders of democratic states to jointly react to China’s rise and the deepening Sino-US rivalry on global affairs.” According to [JoongAng Daily](#), “the B3W aims to block China from attracting them to its side with money.” The G7’s approach to Beijing not only “reflects the West’s deepening disappointments over China’s ever-aggressive expansionary foreign policies,” but also “resembles what was agreed to in the Korea-US summit.” On the other hand, South Korean skeptics agreed with Chinese [counterparts](#) by [noting](#) differences within the G7 as a key challenge for the Biden administration’s “attempt to build an anti-China alliance.”

### China-North Korean Summit Commemorative Diplomacy

While the Biden administration pursued enhanced coordination with South Korea as part of its rising rivalry with China, China and North Korea enhanced the solidarity of their own six-decade alliance. With the prospect of actual summit meetings blocked by COVID and domestic preoccupations in 2021, China and North Korea maintained momentum in bilateral relations through a sustained round of bilateral “commemoration” diplomacy including statements, exhibitions, and meetings to mark the third anniversary of the May 2018 Xi-Kim summits in Beijing and Dalian and the second anniversary of Xi’s June 2019 visit to Pyongyang. The North Korean embassy in Beijing opened a [photo exhibition](#) to mark the third anniversary of Kim’s summit diplomacy with Xi Jinping in Beijing. Chinese Communist Party Central Committee International Liaison Department head Song Tao attended and declared that past summits had laid the groundwork to propel China-DPRK relations to a new stage, while DPRK Ambassador Ri Ryong Nam stated that

meetings between the leaders had opened up a new chapter in DPRK-China friendship. North Korea’s [Chosun monthly magazine](#) also featured in its May issue a major spread highlighting the anniversary of the North Korea-China summit in Dalian.

Alongside this display of bilateral solidarity, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with North Korean ambassador to Beijing Ri Ryong Nam on May 27, shortly after the White House meeting between Moon and Biden. [According to the PRC Foreign Ministry](#), both sides reaffirmed their close relationship, in a signal that close China-North Korean cooperation provided strategic value as an instrument for countering US-South Korea alliance solidarity. Ri emphasized the two countries’ efforts to “enhance solidarity and forge unbreakable friendship,” while Wang Yi emphasized China’s readiness to “maintain high-level strategic communication with the DPRK ... and strengthen coordination and collaboration in regional and international affairs,” and pledged to provide DPRK with “more assistance within its capacity” to improve North Korea’s economy.



Figure 1 PRC State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets new DPRK Ambassador to China Ri Ryong Nam in Beijing. Photo: Xinhua

The Chinese embassy in Pyongyang reciprocated the North Korean embassy’s photo exhibition with one of their own in June to mark the [second anniversary of Xi Jinping’s visit to Pyongyang](#) for meetings with Kim Jong Un. Workers’ Party of Korea International Liaison Department Director Kim Song Nam affirmed the value of Kim-Xi summit contributions to “close strategic communication despite the worsening global health crisis and serious changes in the international and regional situations,” while PRC Ambassador to the DPRK Li Jinjun stated that Xi’s visit to the DPRK has great significance

in “carrying forward the traditions and carving out the future in the development of China-DPRK relations in the new era.” This exhibition coincided with the [June 21 publication](#) of opinion columns in the *Rodong Sinmun* by Ambassador Li Jinjun and in *People’s Daily* by North Korean Ambassador Ri Ryong Nam. Ri stated in his column that “North Korea fully supports the Chinese party and government in defending its core interests in matters such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet.” A joint roundtable was also held in Beijing on June 23 to commemorate both anniversaries.

### 100<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

Having commemorated recent summitry between Kim and Xi, the two countries also highlighted historical milestones. Kim Jong Un offered his [congratulatory message](#) to Xi Jinping on July 1 on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, noting solidarity with the Workers’ Party of Korea in “accelerating socialist construction, protecting the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and preserving global peace.”

Xi responded with a [message of congratulations](#) on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. In that message, Xi emphasized the shared history of solidarity, friendship, and peace, while pledging to work with Kim to “strengthen strategic communication, chart the course for the China-DPRK relationship and lift the friendly cooperation between the two countries to new levels so as to bring more benefits to the two countries and their people.” In his response, Kim praised the “long-term development of the DPRK-China friendship forged with blood on a solid legal basis” and said that “in the face of a complex and ever-changing international landscape, the comradely trust and friendship between the DPRK and China have kept growing deeper, and bilateral relations have advanced to a higher stage.”

The DPRK State Affairs Commission [held a reception](#) in Pyongyang to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conclusion of the treaty. First Vice-President of the Commission Choe Ryong Hae delivered remarks emphasizing the historical solidarity and mutual support in the China-North Korea relationship. Choe stated that the “significance of the treaty has not been played down even a bit despite the passage of 60

years and its strategic importance is growing further pronounced under the present international situation.” PRC Ambassador to North Korea Li Jinjun responded that the common stand recently taken by the two countries on the international arena illustrates the significance of the treaty. [General Secretaries Kim and Xi also exchanged greetings](#) affirming the value of the treaty and pledging continued close mutual cooperation and solidarity. Their statements were supported by newspaper articles in the *Rodong Sinmun* and *People’s Daily* and an [exchange of statements](#) between Wang Yi and Ri Son Gwon.

Kim [offered his sympathies](#) in a verbal message to Xi for Chinese losses due to flooding in Henan province on July 24, to which Xi replied on July 30. In addition, Kim placed a wreath at the base of the Friendship Tower in Pyongyang to honor Chinese soldiers who came to North Korea’s assistance during the Korean War on July 28. The intensification and broadening of the scope of public exchanges around the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the China-DPRK Friendship Treaty suggests that both sides have made significant efforts to overcome practical inhibitions to diplomatic exchange resulting from COVID to strengthen China-North Korean strategic alignment and political solidarity in the face of deepening China-US strategic competition.

### ROK Domestic Politics and Its Impact on China’s Policy

Mutual accusations of interference in internal affairs constrain China-ROK diplomacy. China’s new Special Representative on Korean Peninsula Affairs Liu Xiaoming and South Korea’s nuclear envoy Noh Kyu-duk [held](#) their first telephone talks on June 23, soon after Noh’s trilateral [meeting](#) with US and Japanese counterparts in Seoul on resuming dialogue with North Korea. Earlier that month, Beijing and Seoul agreed to continue joint inspections in the Yellow Sea and further cooperation on illegal fishing in the East Sea/Sea of Japan, where South Korea has blamed Chinese boats for its declining catch. After working-level talks with Chinese counterparts in July, the ROK Defense Ministry affirmed plans for repatriating the remains of Chinese soldiers killed in the Korean War, the eighth transfer since 2014.

But South Korea’s March 2022 presidential elections [amplify](#) points of friction with China, including what the PRC foreign ministry called “[unacceptable](#)” remarks on Hong Kong and

THAAD by some candidates. China's state media reacted angrily to a July 11 [interview](#) by Lee Jun-seok, the millennial leader of biggest opposition party, the People Power Party, who compared the "cruelty" of the "Hong Kong government backed by the Chinese government" to Seoul's crackdown on the 1980 Gwangju democracy protests. *Global Times* [compared](#) Lee's "radical ideological stances" to President Moon's "rational approach toward China," accusing Lee of "taking advantage of nationalist sentiments and democratic narratives" for political purposes. After meeting Lee on July 12, Ambassador Xing Haiming [defended](#) Beijing's position by citing Hong Kong "separatists" and "terrorist activities," and South Korea and China's common interests in Hong Kong's stability.



Figure 2 PRC Ambassador Xing Haiming addresses a forum in Seoul marking the 19th anniversary of China-ROK diplomatic relations. Photo: Yonhap

The THAAD controversy emerged as another flashpoint when Xing challenged a July 15 interview by conservative presidential candidate Yoon Seok-youl, who argued that Beijing should withdraw long-range radar systems on its border in return for THAAD's withdrawal. As South Korea's foreign ministry [protested](#) Xing's reaction, a *Korea Times* editorial on July 19 [called](#) it "an undiplomatic move to interfere in South Korea's political process ahead of the next presidential election." Calling out "Ambassador Xing's arrogant move," Shin Beom-chul of the Korea Research Institute for Economy and Society similarly [argued](#) "Beijing overused its power in diplomacy, looking down on Korea." The Chinese foreign ministry on July 21 reiterated China's principle of noninterference while firmly [defending](#) Xing's "responsibility to make clear China's position on issues concerning major interests."

Differences on peninsula security issues resurfaced at the virtual ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on Aug. 6, attended by Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Chung Eui-yong, and DPRK Ambassador to Indonesia An Kwang Il. [Calling](#) for "parallel progress" on denuclearization and peace, Wang used the ARF platform to [oppose](#) annual US-ROK military drills in line with Pyongyang's own [denunciation](#) days later. South Korea's foreign ministry [called](#) the joint exercises, based largely on computer simulation this year, "an issue that South Korea and the United States decide at the alliance level." But in addition to raising accusations of interference, recent remarks by Chinese officials sharpened Korean domestic criticism of Moon's diplomacy. Moon's return to "strategic ambiguity" despite his joint statement with Biden "caused Xing's interference in domestic affairs" in July according to some [critics](#). Wang Yi's warning on US-ROK military exercises in August similarly [drew](#) attention to Moon's "elusive peace agenda" that is under "pressure" from Beijing and Pyongyang.

Regardless of whether Wang's ARF statement opposing US-ROK military drills was induced by South Korean domestic political developments, it is clear that the China-North Korean alignment on international political issues is becoming stronger. Wang's criticism of joint US-ROK military exercises at the ARF meeting reinforced North Korea's criticisms of the exercises and aligns with China's desire to diminish the US military role and political influence in East Asia. Wang called for a rollback of United Nations Security Council (UNSC)-imposed sanctions on North Korea "so as to create a positive atmosphere for the resumption of dialogue and consultation" and implied that joint military drills were actions that might lead to an escalation of tensions. Wang Yi's stance echoes Chinese and Russian calls for sanctions relaxation toward North Korea in December 2020, despite intervening North Korean statements at the January 2021 Eighth Party Congress pledging to continue nuclear weapons development. Wang reiterated China's support for parallel progress toward denuclearization and establishment of a peace mechanism through phased and synchronized actions ([the dual-track approach](#)), but did not directly join in public calls for North Korea to return to denuclearization talks.

A [North Korean statement on Afghanistan](#) aligned with Chinese criticisms of the US

democracy-building efforts abroad by characterizing the United States as a “disruptor and destroyer of world peace.” The North Korean statement called on the United States to “stop interfering in other countries’ internal affairs under the banner of democracy and human rights and destroying the peace and stability of other countries and regions.”

### Efforts to Improve China-North Korean Economic Relations

Greater political alignment between China and North Korea provided support for efforts to rebuild trade relations. The China-North Korea trade relationship is closely watched as an early indicator of how and when North Korea might move from damaging self-quarantine policies to a resumption of trade and economic interdependence with the outside world. Amid international reports of North Korean internal economic distress and speculation over the impact of COVID, the reopening of the China-North Korea border is one bellwether of possible North Korean willingness to receive aid from South Korea and the international community.

Chinese customs figures show a sixfold increase in Chinese exports to North Korea (from \$2.7 million to \$12.3 million) and 2.5 times increase in imports to North Korea (from \$749,000 to \$1.818 million) between May and June of 2021. Korea International Trade Association (KITA) reports that China-North Korea trade in June increased 302% compared to May to \$14.1 million, following an 88% decrease in May from April to only \$3.5 million. Reports on July customs figures from both the General Administration of Customs of the PRC and KITA suggest that overall trade in July 2021 surpassed \$20 million for the first time since [September 2020](#). These numbers show that despite fluctuations, China-North Korea official trade began to recover over the summer. Reports from early August suggested that a broader reopening of the China-North Korea border could occur as soon as September, but speculation about an early opening of the China-North Korea border has proven unfounded in 2021 despite evidence of North Korean internal distress including evidence of a rise in prices in North Korean markets in June.

In response to a question prompted by Kim Jong Un’s admissions of internal economic distress, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman on June 30 [indicated](#) that “China and the DPRK have a long tradition of mutual assistance in times of need. China stands ready to positively consider

providing help to the DPRK should there be such a need.” The United States and South Korea have reiterated a willingness to consider humanitarian aid for North Korea on multiple occasions during the summer of 2021.

### Vaccines and High-Tech Economic Competition

China-ROK trade volume in January-June reached \$140.59 billion based on South Korean official data, an increase of about 25% compared to the same period last year. A KITA survey of 540 companies in June, however, [showed](#) that more than three-quarters of exporters to China suffered costs from COVID-19. Local sources [report](#) a 28% decline in sales of South Korean big businesses’ Chinese production units in 2016-2020, citing repercussions from the THAAD dispute, the US-China trade war, and weakening competitiveness, especially in the auto sector.

Although President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum supported the APEC summit’s July 16 [joint statement](#) on “Overcoming COVID-19 and Accelerating Economic Recovery,” US-China rivalry frames South Korean debate on managing post-pandemic economic relations. As a [JoongAng Daily](#) editorial indicated, Seoul’s need for vaccines and Washington’s need for South Korean support in its semiconductor competition with China emerged as key points of US-ROK strategic cooperation in May. Advancing such cooperation, a highlight of the Biden-Moon summit was investment plans by South Korean companies in high-tech sectors like semiconductors and electric vehicle batteries. A *Korea Herald* commentator [argued](#) in favor of a “consolidated alliance” with Washington, as “being excluded from the US-led global supply chains could cripple the Korean economy.” A CSIS-Chey Institute joint [report](#) in June identified the development of “trusted supply chains” as an area of US-ROK cooperation that could reduce economic dependence on China in the post-pandemic era.

### Conclusion: Domestic Transition and a Changing World Order

Current exchanges shape the trajectory of China-ROK relations in anticipation of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic normalization and the end of Moon’s term in 2022. Tasked with planning the next 30-year agenda, the multi-sectoral “Committee for Future-Oriented Development of Korea-China Relations” held its inaugural session on Aug. 24 in Seoul. Foreign

Minister Chung Eui-yong marked the occasion by [calling](#) China and South Korea “closest and important neighbors” and “core partners” on peninsula denuclearization and peace. But regional summits this summer intensified Chinese [debate](#) on hegemony and multilateralism in the Biden era, and catalyzed further South Korean reassessment of power and values as the liberal Moon administration prepares for transition. *JoongAng Daily* [argued](#) in light of a changing international order, “The Sino-US contest involves both power and values. We urge Moon to demonstrate his own values — and ours.” The conservative outlet [urged](#) the Moon leadership to “proactively” manage relations with China based on the US-ROK statement and shared “constitutional values,” warning: “China is our largest trade partner. But if Moon gets overly worried about China’s reaction, he could lose the trust of the US and the international community.”

South Korean views of China complicate North Korea’s increasing economic dependency on and political solidarity with China, especially if China is perceived as flouting the very UN sanctions that prevent the Moon administration from pursuing economic integration strategies toward North Korea. On the other hand, early sparring between China and South Korean conservatives raises far more questions about how China could use its growing alignment with North Korea to complicate tensions between China and South Korea (as well as the United States) in the event of a return to conservative leadership in Seoul. South Korea’s leadership transition next year makes it uncertain whether Seoul’s balancing act will continue to dampen frictions with Beijing.



Figure 3 Inauguration session of the Committee for Future-Oriented Development of Korea-China Relations is held in Seoul. Photo: Yonhap

In addition to shared values, Moon’s recent exchange with US allies underscored their common economic interests regarding China. As some Chinese analysts [claimed](#) in June, Washington’s efforts to mobilize partners “by playing the ideology and values card is doomed to fail” due to “fundamental divergences among G7 members and invited countries on how to get along with China.” When US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Seoul in March, *Global Times* quickly [identified](#) South Korea as “the “weak link” of the US strategy of encircling Beijing” given Korea’s “strong political and economic reliance on China.” Based on such dependence, Cheng Xiaohe [suggested](#) after the Biden-Moon summit, “While paying attention to the development of US-South Korea ties, China should also remain restrained, rational and tolerant toward South Korea.”

# CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS

## MAY – AUGUST 2021

**May 3, 2021:** Chinese, South Korean, and Japanese officials [attend](#) the virtual meeting of ASEAN+3 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, and hold trilateral talks.

**May 24, 2021:** China's foreign ministry [expresses](#) concern over the May 21 US–ROK joint statement.

**May 27, 2021:** PRC State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi [meets](#) new DPRK Ambassador to China Ri Ryong Nam in Beijing.

**May 30, 2021:** PRC Premier Li Keqiang [attends](#) the virtual 2021 Partnering for Green Growth and Global Goals 2030 Seoul summit.

**June 8-10, 2021:** China and South Korea [hold](#) working-level talks on illegal fishing.

**June 9, 2021:** PRC and ROK Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Chung Eui-yong [hold](#) telephone talks.

**June 21, 2021:** CPC International Liaison Department [hosts](#) a joint symposium with North Korea commemorating Xi Jinping–Kim Jong Un exchanges.

**June 21, 2021:** PRC Embassy in Pyongyang [holds](#) photo exhibition marking the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Xi–Kim talks.

**June 21, 2021:** PRC Ambassador to North Korea Li Jinjun and DPRK Ambassador to China Ri Ryong Nam [publish](#) op-eds in *Rodong Sinmun* and *People's Daily* respectively on China–DPRK friendship.

**June 23, 2021:** China's special representative on Korean Peninsula affairs Liu Xiaoming and South Korea's chief nuclear negotiator Noh Kyu-duk [hold](#) telephone talks.

**July 1, 2021:** Kim Jong Un [sends](#) a message to Xi Jinping commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPC's founding.

**July 7, 2021:** New Special US Representative for North Korea Sung Kim and PRC counterpart Liu Xiaoming [hold](#) telephone talks.

**July 8-10, 2021:** ROK Foreign Ministry [holds](#) an exhibition for South Korean, Chinese, and Japanese artists with disabilities, “Trilateral Cooperation Blooms Through Art.”

**July 11, 2021:** Xi and Kim [exchange](#) messages marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the China–DPRK friendship treaty.

**July 12, 2021:** PRC Ambassador Xing Haiming and People Power Party leader Lee Jun-seok [meet](#) in Seoul.

**July 16, 2021:** PRC President Xi and ROK Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum [attend](#) virtual APEC summit.

**July 23, 2021:** Beijing [approves](#) the entry of Pakistani rescue helicopters into Chinese territory to search for a South Korean mountain climber missing in the Himalayas since July 19.

**July 23, 2021:** Xi [sends](#) a reply letter to Kim supporting China–DPRK relations.

**July 24, 2021:** Kim [sends](#) a verbal message of support to Xi for flood recovery efforts in Henan province.

**July 26, 2021:** After working-level talks with China, ROK Defense Ministry announces September [plans](#) to repatriate remains of Chinese soldiers killed in the Korean War.

**July 28, 2021:** Kim, during a visit to Friendship Tower marking the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, [expresses](#) support for relations with China.

**Aug. 2, 2021:** DPRK Foreign Ministry [criticizes](#) Human Rights Watch's account of China's repatriation of DPRK defectors.

**Aug. 6, 2021:** PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi, ROK Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, and DPRK Ambassador to Indonesia An Kwang-il [attend](#) the virtual ASEAN Regional Forum.

**Aug. 11, 2021:** PRC Ambassador Xing Haiming [addresses](#) a forum in Seoul marking the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China-ROK diplomatic relations.

**Aug. 24, 2021:** Inauguration session of the Committee for Future-Oriented Development of Korea-China Relations is [held](#) in Seoul.

**Aug. 30, 2021:** Chinese, South Korean, and Japanese culture ministers [hold](#) virtual talks on trilateral cooperation.

