

# COMPARATIVE

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## CONNECTIONS

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

CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS

## A SUBDUED ENVIRONMENT AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

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Chinese diplomacy toward the Korean Peninsula in late 2023 sputtered forward, driven more by a calendar of bilateral anniversaries with North Korea and multilateral gatherings involving South Korea than any sense of strategic purpose. Both relationships seemed preoccupied with off-stage developments such as the September summit between Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin and the momentum of US-Japan-South Korea trilateral relations, rather than any inherent dynamism of their own. Still, regular Sino-North Korean bilateral exchanges ahead of the 75th anniversary of the bilateral relationship and Sino-South Korean bilateral economic dialogues provide opportunities to overcome resistance and sustain progress in the face of deepening major power rivalries. Senior-level dialogues between China and North Korea occurred on North Korea's 75th founding anniversary in September, with the visit of Chinese Vice Premier Liu Guozhong to Pyongyang, a visit that occurred against the backdrop of the second US-South Korea Nuclear Consultative Group meeting, North Korea's first successful indigenous satellite launch, and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong Ho's visit to Beijing.

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Meanwhile, ministerial and working-level economic dialogues on issues such as supply-chain stability, export controls, and trade facilitation continued between China and South Korea, punctuated by a notable bilateral exchange between Chinese President Xi Jinping and South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo in late September on the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou. But these exchanges did not generate the traction necessary for South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to have substantive bilateral meetings with President Xi on the sidelines of the APEC meeting in San Francisco in November. Bilateral and trilateral foreign ministerial meetings in Busan between South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and counterparts Wang Yi and Kamikawa Yoko—the first in four years—failed to generate sufficient momentum to set a date for the resumption of China-Japan-South Korea summitry. Instead, the resumption of China-South Korea or China-Japan-South Korea summitry will depend on developments in 2024.



Figure 1 President Xi and South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo meet in Hangzhou, where the 19th Asian Games start. Photo: Pang Xinglei

### China-South Korea Bilateral Dialogues Generate Mixed Signals

Despite relative inertia surrounding China-South Korea relations, the two governments maintained a steady stream of bilateral contacts in the closing months of 2023. But these dialogues failed to generate sufficient impetus to yield a bilateral leader-level summit by the end of the year despite an optimistic exchange between President Xi and Prime Minister Han during the Asian Games. [Han's visit to China](#) was the first by a South Korean prime minister in over four years and generated expectations in South Korea that Xi might make his first visit to Seoul since 2014. Han expressed the desire “to cultivate a healthy and mature

relationship between South Korea and China, grounded in mutual respect, mutual benefit, and common interests.” Han also requested China’s support for the Yoon administration’s “Audacious Initiative” toward North Korea and for South Korea’s bid to host the 2030 World Expo in Busan. [Xi emphasized](#) the importance of “friendly cooperation” and expressed hope that South Korea “will work with China in the same direction, take policies and actions that can reflect the importance it attaches to the development of China-ROK relations, respect each other, and safeguard the general direction of friendly cooperation.” Media reports expressed optimism that the meeting would lead to the resumption of trilateral China-South Korea-Japan summit meetings to be held in South Korea. But Liaoning University Professor Lü Chao stated [in the Global Times](#) that political tensions generated by President Yoon’s pro-US approach and statements regarding Taiwan had “become a significant barrier to revive the three-way cooperation mechanism.”

Despite mixed signals surrounding the Xi-Han exchange, China and South Korea held regular bilateral working-level, private sector, and ministerial consultations through the end of the year. In November, South Korea returned the remains of 25 Chinese troops killed during the Korean War in another gesture designed to improve the bilateral relationship. [China received the remains](#) and honored their sacrifices in a burial ceremony at the Shenyang Martyrs’ Cemetery.



Figure 2 On November 23, 2023, a Chinese Air Force Y-20 transported the remains of 25 Chinese People’s Volunteers martyrs from South Korea to Shenyang Taoxian International Airport in Northeast China’s Liaoning Province. Photo: VCG

The inaugural [South Korea-China Economic Cooperation Exchange](#) public-private meeting took place in Changchun in November, led by

China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and South Korea's Ministry of Finance and Economy, following up on a ministerial pledge made in August 2022. Representatives from Hyundai Motor, LG Chem, and others participated along with China's Alibaba Group in a meeting designed to promote better public-private sector communication regarding obstacles to doing business in China. In addition, the two countries held the first South Korea-China Supply Chain Hotline meeting and the fourth South Korea-China Working-Level Industrial Cooperation meeting in Seoul in December. [Business leaders](#) from the China Center for International Economic Exchanges and the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry also met to discuss global supply chains, digital and green transitions, and intellectual property protection issues.

In December, South Korean Trade Minister Ahn Dukgeun led a delegation to Beijing for consultations with International Trade Representative Wang Shouwen on the fifth Korea-China Free Trade Agreement Joint Committee meeting. There, both sides agreed to [strengthen industrial supply chain cooperation](#) and exchanged views on launching a dialogue on export controls alongside discussions on FTA implementation. Both sides also [agreed to activate a hotline between ministries](#) to discuss supply chain issues, and South Korea requested "imminent action" to address Chinese delays in customs procedures for urea exports to South Korea. At the deputy director-general level, the Chinese and South Korean foreign ministries led a meeting on maritime affairs, marking the return of working-level contact on such issues.

Other developments affecting the bilateral China-South Korea relationship included the announcement of a US-South Korea joint effort to counter disinformation, [MOTIE's announcement of its 3050 Strategy initiative](#) designed to stabilize South Korea's supply chains and reduce dependence on China to less than 50% by 2030, and [South Korean scrambling of jets](#) following the entry of two Chinese and four Russian military planes into South Korea's air defense identification zone. The signing of the US-South Korea Memorandum of Understanding occurred on the occasion of [US Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Liz Allen's](#) visit to Seoul in December and reflects South Korean concerns about false propaganda and global disinformation campaigns, mentioned by

President Yoon in his April address to a joint session of the US Congress. The signing of the MOU is even more salient in light of reports that the [Chinese Ministry of State Security](#) attempted to hack South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had infiltrated the computer network of the Presidential Office during the Moon Jae-in administration. Similarly, MOTIE's effort to reduce dependence on China in its supply chains responds to a deeper realization in South Korea of its vulnerability to possible Chinese economic retaliation. South Korea's scrambling of jets to defend its KADIZ against Chinese and Russian aerial intrusions further underscores the impact of deepening major power rivalry on South Korea's security environment.

### **Multilateral Diplomacy and Missed Opportunities for China-South Korea Summitry**

Annual ASEAN and APEC meetings have long provided opportunities for national leaders to hold summit meetings on bilateral issues of concern, such as when President Yoon met President Xi at the [November 2022 G20 Summit in Bali](#). But the November 2023 APEC meeting in San Francisco generated only an exchange of greetings between Presidents Xi and Yoon. Likewise, despite Xi's expression of willingness to visit Seoul in his meeting with Prime Minister Han referenced above, South Korea's preparations to host the first leader-level trilateral meeting with China and Japan yielded no fruit in 2023.

President Yoon and Premier Li Qiang held two brief encounters in quick succession on the sidelines of the ASEAN and G20 summits in Jakarta and New Delhi, respectively, in early September. In those meetings, Yoon expressed his hope that the North Korean nuclear issue would not be an [obstacle](#) to improved China-South Korea relations. [Premier Li emphasized](#) the need to expand cooperation to "seek mutual benefit and win-win results."



Figure 3 South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Chinese Premier Li Qiang meet in Jakarta on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings. Photo: Xinhua

Chinese scholar Zhan Debin laid out the obstacles to the realization of a trilateral summit in a *Global Times* column pointedly titled “[South Needs to Prove Sincerity for China-Japan-SK summit](#).” The article points to several obstacles to the stabilization of China-South Korea relations under the Yoon administration. First, the article takes issue with the proposition that South Korea will be able to induce greater respect from China based on closer relations with the United States and Japan, asserting that South Korea has instead weakened its “autonomy.” Second, Zhan points to Yoon’s disavowal of the Moon-era “three nos and one restriction” understanding with the Chinese government regarding THAAD and its disregard for Chinese “red lines” on Taiwan, the South China Sea, and Xinjiang. Third, Zhan criticizes alleged South Korean interference in the activities of the Chinese ambassador to South Korea, covered in the [summer 2023 issue of Comparative Connections](#). Zhan concludes that “if South Korea is pushing for the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral talk because of US instructions, it would be better not to hold the meeting at all.” A series of [Global Times](#) editorials and [columns by Zhan](#) reiterated the message that US-Japan-South Korea trilateralism was more likely to hurt than help the China-South Korea relationship.

### Efforts to Jump-Start Trilateral China-Japan-South Korea Summitry

Amid such rhetoric, China participated in the trilateral senior officials’ meeting in Seoul in late September and meetings with Foreign Minister Park Jin. Those meetings were accompanied by a more optimistic tone from the *Global Times*, which emphasized the unchanged

framework of “gain from cooperation, lose from confrontation” stemming from economic interdependence, the priority of economic development, and close geographical and cultural ties. President Xi’s meeting with Prime Minister Han further underscored a positive tone around prospects for reviving trilateral China-Japan-South Korea summitry.

However, [Chinese commentators responded](#) negatively to the virtual US-Japan-South Korea defense ministerial meeting in mid-November that was held alongside the US-South Korea Security Consultative Meeting in Seoul. Liaoning University’s Lu Chao suggested that following the Camp David Summit, enhanced United States-Japan-South Korea military cooperation contributed to a worsening of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and China Foreign Affairs University’s Li Haidong asserted that such ties would make the Korean security situation more volatile and that the shift to a “trilateral bloc is a substantial step in reshaping US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.”

Minister Park Jin met Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the trilateral China-Japan-South Korea foreign ministers’ meeting in Busan at the end of November. The [South Korean readout](#) from the bilateral meeting emphasized joint efforts to strengthen mutual understanding, strengthen strategic communication, and contribute to regional and global peace and prosperity through economic cooperation, promotion of people-to-people exchanges, and restoring and normalizing cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea. Park also highlighted South Korean concerns about North Korea’s satellite launches and objected to China’s “forcible repatriation of North Korean defectors in China.”



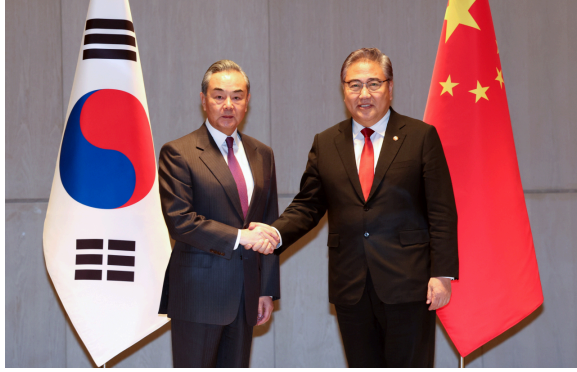


Figure 4 Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin meet in Busan on the sidelines of the tenth China-South Korea-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Photo: Yonhap

The Chinese readout reported [Wang's description](#) of changes in the international and regional landscapes and their impact on China-South Korea relations in greater detail. Wang emphasized that “China and the ROK are neighbors that cannot move away, and this objective fact will never change,” arguing that cooperation is the only path through which to develop a mutually trusting and respectful relationship. Wang emphasized that “the two sides should jointly resist the tendency of politicizing economic issues, instrumentalizing scientific and technological issues, and overstretching the concept of security of economic and trade issues, maintain stable and unimpeded industrial and supply chains, and work for greater development of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.”

[Chinese](#) and [South Korean](#) readouts of the trilateral meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko emphasized efforts to institutionalize cooperation through a trilateral leader-level summit at the earliest possible time and to deepen substantive trilateral cooperation across six main areas: people-to-people exchanges, science and technology and digital transition, sustainable development and climate change, health and aging population, economy and trade, and peace and security. The three ministers appreciated reforestation projects to combat desertification in Mongolia, the need to maintain communication to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, and cooperation on functional issues including climate change, cybersecurity, and the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East. In addition to the foreign ministerial meeting, the three countries [successfully hosted](#) the 16th trilateral health ministers' meeting in early December in Beijing

for the first time in four years and released a joint statement on cooperation in response to infectious diseases.

### China and North Korea Commemorate Friendship as North Korea Test-Fires ICBM

North Korea's 75th founding anniversary in September and the 75th anniversary of China-North Korea diplomatic ties in December catalyzed bilateral exchanges following the hiatus caused by COVID-19. Vice Premier Liu Guozhong led a Chinese delegation to Pyongyang's National Day celebrations. Events included a [military parade](#) on Sept. 9 attended by Kim Jong Un, who vowed to bolster nuclear deterrence after overseeing North Korea's [launching](#) of a “tactical nuclear attack submarine” three days earlier. In a Sept. 9 [message](#) to Kim, President Xi pledged to advance the “traditional friendship,” noting their five meetings between 2018 and 2019. Xi hailed Pyongyang's “new achievements” pursuing its “socialist cause,” including economic successes since the Eighth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea in 2021. While North Korea's Vice Sports Minister Kim Il-guk visited China in late September for the Asian Games, no other official engagements were reported. In October, China's National Day prompted Xi and Kim to exchange letters consolidating bilateral ties. Commemorations of China's entry into the Korean War at the Friendship Tower in Pyongyang symbolized the historical relationship.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong Ho used the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic ties to reaffirm the friendship, [meeting](#) on Dec. 15 in Beijing. The talks coincided with the second US-South Korea Nuclear Consultative Group [meeting](#) initiated under the April 2023 [Washington Declaration](#). Pak met Foreign Minister Wang Yi three days later when North Korea test-fired a *Hwasong-18* intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in violation of UN resolutions. South Korea's foreign ministry [called for](#) China's “constructive role” as “a responsible permanent member of the UN Security Council and a country that has an influence over North Korea,” promising to work with other partners including the United States and Japan on “independent and multilateral sanctions.”

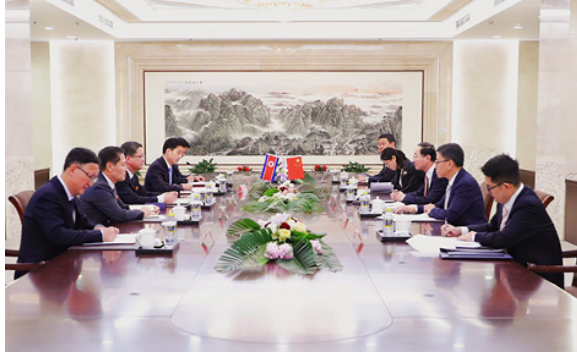


Figure 5 Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin meet in Busan on the sidelines of the tenth China-South Korea-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

Peninsula tensions had already surfaced with Pyongyang's launching of a military spy satellite on Nov. 21 after two failed launches in May and August. On Nov. 30, the US Treasury Department [sanctioned](#) international agents of North Korean sanctions evasion and a North Korean cyber espionage group. In response to North Korea's ICBM test, South Korea sanctioned eight North Korean individuals involved in illicit arms trade and cyber activities on Dec. 28.

### Nuclear Diplomacy and Strategic Triangles

In a [joint statement](#) ahead of a Dec. 19 UN Security Council meeting, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and seven other countries condemned North Korea's ICBM launch—its fifth this year. The United Nation's repeated failure to act renewed skepticism about any new resolution emerging over Chinese and Russian opposition. North Korean UN envoy Kim Song reiterated "the right to self-defense of the DPRK," denouncing the "military threat" from "the US and its followers." South Korean envoy Hwang Joon-kook reasserted South Korean efforts to counter North Korean security threats in cooperation with the United States and Japan. Joint US-South Korea military exercises on Dec. 20 showed such efforts, in addition to operationalization of a missile warning data-sharing system by the end of the year under the August 2023 [Camp David Summit](#). In a Dec. 21 KCNA [press statement](#), Kim Jong Un's sister and WPK Central Committee Vice Department Director Kim Yo Jong condemned US-led "military threats" as "the root cause of escalating the regional situation."



Figure 6 On December 19, 2023, the U.N. Security Council meets to address North Korea's recent solid-fuel ICBM launch. Photo: U.N. Web TV

Ahead of his parliamentary confirmation hearing on Dec. 20, Seoul's nominee for foreign minister and former UN Ambassador [Cho Tae-yul](#) promised to boost nuclear deterrence. He also [signaled](#) intentions to rebalance ties with Washington and Beijing. Projecting a worsening security environment next year, South Korean media commentators urged the Yoon administration to coordinate US deterrence with alternative solutions, including "[improving ties with China](#)" to "[restore diplomatic balance](#)."

Chinese and North Korean trilateral ties with Russia are another point of South Korean debate. In a Nov. 19 [interview](#) with *The Telegraph* ahead of his UK state visit, President Yoon reminded China that "pursuing trilateral cooperation with North Korea and Russia...will not be helpful for its international reputation and standing." US-Japan-South Korea foreign ministerial [talks](#) on Nov. 14 at the APEC Summit raised similar concerns over North Korea's "trilateral security cooperation." The US State Department highlighted the nuclear risks of such an arrangement in its "[Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity](#)," [released](#) a day later.

### South Korea's Shifting Regional Geoeconomic Orientation

A [significant measure](#) of the impact of South Korea's evolution in geopolitical orientation reflects the shift in South Korea's trade relations, as the United States became South Korea's number one export destination in December 2023, surpassing China for the first time since 2004. South Korea also recorded an \$18 billion trade deficit with China, the first bilateral deficit with China in 31 years. South Korean exports to China in 2023 dropped 20%

year-on-year, to \$124.8 billion, while imports from China dipped 8% year-on-year, to \$142.8 billion. Strong investment flows to the United States by South Korea's major conglomerates have resulted in a boost in South Korean car, automobile parts, and automotive battery exports. If such trends continue, South Korea in 2024 may have the distinction of being the only country adjacent to China for which China is not its number one trade partner.

Another indicator of distancing between China and South Korea post-pandemic is evident in the educational sector, as South Korea's [Ministry of Education](#) reports that the number of South Korean students studying in China has declined from 26,949 (17.2% of Korean students abroad) in 2021 to 15,857 (12.9% of Korean students abroad) in 2023. While the number of Korean students in the United States has declined from 49,809 in 2021 to 40,755 in 2023, the proportion of South Korean students abroad studying in the United States has increased from 31.8% to 33.1%.

In terms of inbound students to South Korea, the [Ministry of Education reports](#) that the number of Chinese students has remained the same at around 68,000 from 2018 to 2023, but the proportion of Chinese students among the overall foreign student population has declined from 48.2% to 37.4%, as South Korea has registered an increase in the number of foreign students from 142,205 in 2018 to 181,842 in 2023. During this same period, the number of foreign students from Vietnam has increased from 27,061 (19% of all students) to 43,361 (23.8% of all students).

### **Border Reopening Revives China-North Korea Trade and Human Rights Concerns**

Pyongyang's post-pandemic border reopening in late August sharpened attention on economic engagements with China. China's trade with North Korea has rebounded from historic lows resulting from North Korea's pandemic-era self-quarantine. Chinese exports to North Korea from January to November 2023 increased by over 130% over 2022 levels to almost \$1.8 billion while Chinese imports from North Korea increased by a similar amount to \$266 million, based on [Chinese customs data](#). Although North Korea has presumably reduced its economic dependency on China somewhat because of its munitions trade with Russia, China likely remains an irreplaceable source for procuring

many necessities for daily life in North Korea. In December, South Korea's Unification Minister Kim Yung-ho raised concerns over North Korea's [unauthorized](#) use of South Korean-owned facilities at the Kaesong Industrial Complex, and Beijing's limited imposition of sanctions on the North Korean regime. Air Koryo's resumption of Pyongyang-Shenyang commercial flights in August indicated a gradual revival of cross-border activity.

The China-North Korea border reopening also renewed attention on China's repatriation of North Korean refugees, who China has traditionally identified as illegal economic immigrants. Concerns heightened with China's reported repatriation of hundreds of North Korean defectors in October, as reflected in recent UN and South Korean resolutions. On Dec. 19, the UN General Assembly passed a [resolution](#) on North Korean human rights for the 19th year in a row, referencing North Koreans "being forcibly repatriated." Adopted on Nov. 30, a resolution by South Korea's National Assembly called on China to stop repatriating North Koreans, while pushing South Korean and international agencies to work harder on the issue. At a [forum](#) in Washington earlier that month, Unification Minister Kim urged Beijing to ensure "North Korean defectors in China can be protected of their human rights based on the international norm." Activists [rallied](#) at the South Korean Foreign Ministry in October, voicing public demands to "[stop China's repatriation of North Koreans.](#)" [Video talks](#) between special representatives Liu Xiaoming and Sung Kim on Oct. 30 prioritized China's repatriation of North Korean nationals, in addition to Pyongyang's aggression and military cooperation with Russia. The Chinese foreign ministry's [report](#) of the meeting did not specify such priorities.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of deepening geostrategic rivalry is clearly contributing to a reconfiguring of political and economic relationships in Northeast Asia, with a mixed impact on the Korean Peninsula. South Korea appears to be drawing away from China's geoeconomic orbit as South Korean investment in the United States reinforces the geopolitical choices of the Yoon administration. Meanwhile, China's economic relationship with North Korea has recovered, with the effects of North Korean diversification

efforts and revitalization of its relations with Russia still unknown. In addition, it remains to be seen how China grapples with closer Japan-South Korea relations and whether China will achieve the normalization of a “[win-win-win](#)” relationship among the three countries “with a particular emphasis on Tokyo and Seoul demonstrating more strategic autonomy” or whether the Camp David Summit will create additional impediments and constraints on China’s ability to project its sphere of influence in the region.



# CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS

## SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2023

**Sept. 7, 2023:** South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Chinese Premier Li Qiang [meet](#) in Jakarta on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings.

**Sept. 8, 2023:** A Chinese delegation led by Vice Premier Liu Guozhong [visits](#) Pyongyang.

**Sept. 9, 2023:** President Xi Jinping [sends](#) a message to Kim Jong Un marking North Korea's 75<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary.

**Sept. 23, 2023:** President Xi and South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo [meet](#) in Hangzhou, where the 19th Asian Games start.

**Sept. 24, 2023:** Kim [sends](#) a response letter to Xi.

**Sept. 25, 2023:** South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Park Jin [takes part](#) in the Korea-Japan-China Trilateral Senior Officials' Meeting.

**Sept. 26, 2023:** China-South Korea-Japan senior officials' meeting [takes place](#) in Seoul.

**Sept. 28, 2023:** US soldier Travis King [is returned](#) from North Korea, with assistance from China.

**Oct. 1, 2023:** Kim [sends](#) a letter to Xi marking China's seventy-fourth founding anniversary.

**Oct. 17, 2023:** Activists at the South Korean Foreign Ministry protest China's repatriation of North Koreans.

**Oct. 24, 2023:** Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong and a China-South Korea-Japan Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat delegation led by Secretary-General Lee Hee-sup [meet](#) in Beijing.

**Oct. 25, 2023:** North Korea [commemorates](#) 73<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of China's entry into the Korean War.

**Oct. 28, 2023:** President Xi [sends](#) a reply letter to Kim Jong Un.

**Oct. 30, 2023:** South Korean Foreign Ministry sends condolence messages to China on the death of Premier Li Keqiang.

**Nov. 2, 2023:** Xi sends a response letter to Kim.

**Nov. 14, 2023:** First South Korea-China Economic Cooperation Exchange [is held](#) in Changchun.

**Nov. 21, 2023:** North Korea [launches](#) a military spy satellite.

**Nov. 22, 2023:** Yulin, Shaanxi province [hosts](#) 20<sup>th</sup> Korea Heart to Heart (K2H) Symposium on International Exchanges of Civil Servants for subnational China-South Korea cooperation.

**Nov. 23, 2023:** South Korea [returns](#) the remains of 25 Chinese soldiers killed in the Korean War.

**Nov. 26, 2023:** Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin [meet](#) in Busan on the sidelines of the tenth China-South Korea-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

**Nov. 27, 2023:** UN Security Council [holds](#) a briefing on North Korea's satellite launch.

**Nov. 30, 2023:** South Korea's National Assembly [passes](#) resolution calling on China to stop repatriating North Korean refugees.

**Dec. 3, 2023:** 16th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting [is held](#) in Beijing.

**Dec. 4, 2023:** South Korean Minister for Trade Dukgeun Ahn and Chinese International Trade

Representative Wang Shouwen [attend](#) the fifth Korea-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Joint Committee meeting held in Beijing.

**Dec. 6, 2023:** South Korean Deputy Director-General for Northeast Asian Affairs Kang Young-Shin and Chinese Deputy Director-General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs Yang Renhuo [co-chair](#) a Korea-China Deputy Director-Generals' Meeting on Maritime Affairs in Shanghai.

**Dec. 13, 2023:** North Korea's Air Koryo [resumes](#) Pyongyang-Shenyang commercial flights.

**Dec. 14, 2023:** Two Chinese and four Russian military planes [enter](#) South Korea's air defense identification zone without notice.

**Dec. 15, 2023:** Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong Ho [meet](#) in Beijing.

**Dec. 18, 2023:** North Korea [test-fires](#) a *Hwasong-18* ICBM.

**Dec. 18, 2023:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak [meet](#) in Beijing.

**Dec. 18, 2023:** First South Korea-China Supply Chain Hotline Meeting and the fourth South Korea-China Working-Level Industrial Cooperation Meeting [takes place](#) in Seoul.

**Dec. 19, 2023:** Chinese and South Korean foreign ministries [hold](#) director-general consultations in Shenzhen.