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CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS

## CHINA AND THE TWO KOREAS' TRIANGULAR GAMES

SEE-WON BYUN, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

A rebound in China-ROK diplomacy raised optimism after a slow start to 2024, paving the way for the summit between Xi Jinping and Yoon Suk Yeol on Nov. 15. They met on the sidelines of APEC Peru before attending the G20 summit in Brazil. Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Cho Tae-yul met in Beijing on May 13, facilitating the China-ROK-Japan trilateral summit and Yoon's meeting with Premier Li Qiang in Seoul. As China-DPRK exchanges dwindled compared to the first third of this year, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un's summits with Putin in May and June raised questions about the direction of China's Korea policy. Donald Trump's reelection in November intensified debate on the regional security and economic implications of US-China competition.

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## New Momentum in China-South Korea Partnership?

ROK Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul's May 13-14 visit to Beijing set a positive tone for this year's high-level exchanges. It marked his first face-to-face talks with Foreign Minister Wang Yi since taking office in January, and the first visit to China by a ROK foreign minister since 2017. Cho [raised](#) hopes for a "new phase" of sustainable cooperation, "fostering mutual trust rather than solely focusing on the speed and volume of the development of the bilateral relationship." They recognized space for further expanding economic cooperation, and agreed to boost local government and societal exchanges to improve mutual public perceptions. Setting up Yoon's summits with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in Seoul later that month, South Korea's foreign ministry [concluded](#) the ministers' meeting "created a new momentum for the development of the Korea-China relationship."

President Yoon met Premier Li on May 26 in Seoul, a day before trilateral talks with Prime Minister Kishida. While focused largely on economic priorities, a key outcome of Yoon-Li talks was the reactivation and expansion of strategic communication channels. They agreed to create the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue between foreign and defense ministries, after the halting of similar mechanisms a decade ago. [Initiated](#) on June 18 in Seoul, the "2+2" meeting was led by China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, Deputy Director of the Central Military Commission's Office for International Military Cooperation Zhang Baoqun, South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Hong Kyun, and Director General of the PRC Defense Ministry's International Policy Bureau Lee Seung-buhm. It facilitated separate talks between Sun and Foreign Minister Cho. Cho met China's vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu on July 24 in Seoul, where Ma and Korean counterpart Kim Hong-kyun [led](#) the 10<sup>th</sup> China-ROK high-level strategic dialogue, last held virtually in December 2021. ASEAN forums in Laos allowed foreign ministers Wang Yi and Cho Tae-yul to meet again on July 26 to reaffirm active progress in enhancing bilateral dialogue.

China and South Korea's 9<sup>th</sup> [trilateral summit](#) with Japan on May 27 was highly anticipated after a four-year suspension. This year's summit marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of China-ROK-Japan cooperation stemming from

the ASEAN+3 mechanism. Making "our bilateral relations and trilateral cooperation mutually reinforcing" topped Li's five-point [proposal](#), extending to trade, innovation, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. China's foreign ministry [stressed](#) the summit's "highly meaningful" value symbolizing a "new start" for trilateral cooperation. Supporting the Yoon administration's optimistic reviews, Korean public opinion praised the summit's significance for [Northeast Asian](#) security, the "[central theme](#)" of China-ROK ties, and overall "[progress](#)" despite China's "different tone" on North Korea. The 8<sup>th</sup> trilateral [business summit](#) was held alongside the leaders' meeting, hosted by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Japan Business Federation.

The Xi-Yoon November [summit](#) renewed high-level support for developing the China-ROK "strategic cooperative partnership" in security, economic, and cultural fields. Xi and Yoon last met in November 2022 on the sidelines of the G20. China's foreign ministry [emphasized](#) joint commitments to "the original intention of establishing diplomatic relations" despite "many changes" in the international environment since 2022. Yoon reiterated his vision for building a partnership based on "mutual respect, reciprocity, and common interests."

### Friction Points: Third Parties and Internal Affairs

The resurgence of China-ROK diplomacy from May failed to mask enduring strategic challenges. This year's earlier lull in contacts magnified US-China competition and Yoon's US-ROK alliance focus constrained the China-ROK partnership. For South Korean [skeptics](#), besides agreeing to hold a good trilateral summit and intensify bilateral meetings, Foreign Ministers Wang and Cho in May "merely said what they wanted to say in diplomatic ways." According to Yun Sun at the Stimson Center, Beijing's [primary](#) motive for the trilateral summit was to "counterbalance US influence." Featuring interviews with China's Korea experts Zhang Huizhi at Jilin University and Da Zhigang at Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences, Chinese state media [warned](#) Japan and South Korea "should not lose their own interests following US' suppression of China." South Korea's trilateral vice foreign

ministerial meeting with US and Japanese allies right after the China-ROK-Japan summit was disappointing news indicating “Seoul’s diplomatic immaturity” and “[hasty](#) declaration of loyalty,” according to state think tank scholars like Dong Xiangrong.

Competing views of third-party actors, and interference in each other’s internal affairs, resurfaced in China-ROK diplomatic interactions. In Peru, Yoon held trilateral talks with Biden and Kishida the same day he met Xi. Launching a new Trilateral Secretariat, they [renewed](#) their 2023 Camp David pledges on Indo-Pacific and South China Sea maritime security, and Taiwan. South Korean media attention on November’s multilateral summits [focused](#) on Seoul’s quest to build global support on Korean security, and “free and fair trade” as host of APEC 2025. As Yoon’s key advisor Kim Tae-hyo reported after the Xi-Yoon summit, Yoon [expressed](#) hopes for cooperation with China “in response to North Korea’s repeated provocations, the war in Ukraine and military cooperation between Russia and North Korea.” While jointly applauding the “vitalization of bilateral exchange and cooperation in various areas,” Foreign Minister Cho [told](#) Vice Minister Ma in July, “North Korea’s continued provocations and its close ties with Russia are seriously threatening peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the international community.” Although Cho communicated similar concerns to Wang in May, Foreign Minister Wang [reaffirmed](#) China’s “unchanged” Korea policy and “constructive role” on the peninsula.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, holds talks with Cho Tae-yul, foreign minister of the Republic of Korea (ROK), in Beijing, capital of China, May 13, 2024. [Photo/Xinhua]

Friction over Taiwan prompted Seoul to repeat its “unchanged” position on the One China Policy. Ruling People Power Party lawmaker Cho Kyoung-tae’s participation in Taiwan President Lai Ching-te’s inauguration reignited angry responses from Beijing, and an [exchange](#) of accusations of internal interference. China’s Foreign Ministry raised the Taiwan issue during [meetings](#) with ROK and Japanese Embassy representatives in Beijing on May 22 on trilateral cooperation. On June 3, ministry spokesperson Mao Ning [described](#) US-ROK-Japan defense and diplomatic talks as a means “to advance the so-called “Indo-Pacific Strategy,” point fingers on the Taiwan question, grossly interfere in China’s internal affairs, once again deliberately attack and vilify China on maritime issues and sow discord between China and neighboring countries.” Such disagreements [surfaced](#) more broadly in China-ROK 2+2 talks two weeks later. On peninsula security, Chinese officials indicated China “will continue to play a constructive role in its own way.” They claimed Russia and North Korea “have the legitimate need” for engagement as “friendly and close neighbors” and “two sovereign countries.”

### The Implications of Xi and Kim’s Summits with Putin

Beijing-Pyongyang high-level communication was limited to Xi and Kim’s exchange of anniversary messages on the DPRK’s founding in September and on PRC-DPRK diplomatic ties in October. Their bilateral summits with Putin in May and June raised more important implications for China-Korea relations. To commemorate the China-DPRK Friendship Treaty in July, the DPRK Embassy in Beijing [hosted](#) the foreign affairs chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, He Ping. The lower level of DPRK representation at the Chinese Embassy reception compared to last year’s anniversary sparked speculation about the impact of Pyongyang’s cooperation with Russia. South Korean media in July interpreted various signs of widening division, including Beijing’s push to [return](#) DPRK workers in China in line with UN resolutions, its tightened monitoring of bilateral trade, and Kim Jong Un’s reported directive to China-based diplomats to “[ignore China](#).” Pyongyang’s immediate denunciation of the May 27 China-ROK-Japan statement, coinciding with a failed satellite launch that night, raised similar speculation, reinforced by Beijing’s less

explicit triangular alignment with Russian and DPRK allies.

Putin's June 18-19 visit to Pyongyang for his historic [summit](#) with Kim raised China's [dilemma](#) of managing historically-strained ties with North Korea and Russia, as 2024 marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of China's ties with both allies. In a July 23 *Yonhap* [interview](#), DPRK defector and former diplomat Ri Il-gyu explained Pyongyang's "estranged" ties with China since late 2022: "For North Korea, it is not a top priority to recover its ties with China. The North's primary goal is to elicit the maximum benefit from Russia and map out its strategies to brace for Trump's possible return...North Korea believes China does not make it live well, but it also thinks Beijing would not let it die of hunger." The Putin-Kim summit's timing with China-ROK 2+2 strategic talks on June 18 prompted China's foreign ministry to [assure](#) that dialogue plans with Seoul have "no particular link to other countries." Some observers saw the Putin-Kim summit as an opening for "[Seoul-Beijing détente](#)," concluding "South Korea's cooperation with China may prove to be more significant than Russia's support for North Korea." A *JoongAng Daily* editorial argued, such a scenario for Seoul [first](#) requires "exploiting Beijing's concerns about its weakening leverage on Pyongyang and repercussions of a strengthened unity of the West," before responding with the United States and other allies. At a June 17 Wilson Center forum, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who [met](#) President Yoon in Washington a month later, [noted](#) the growing importance of transatlantic cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners.

Xi's [summit](#) with Putin on May 16 in Beijing, and Pyongyang's ballistic missile test a day later, heightened skepticism about deterring North Korean aggression through UN sanctions. The meeting was even more [disappointing](#) for South Koreans in light of Foreign Minister Cho's May 13-14 visit to Beijing, raising calls for South Korea's own nuclear development or "NATO-style" cooperation. DPRK missile tests from May included a new record-setting Hwasong-19 intercontinental ballistic missile test on Oct. 31, Pyongyang's 11<sup>th</sup> ICBM launch since 2021. While pointing to "large loopholes" in the global sanctions regime, ROK Ambassador to the UN Hwang Joon-kook [called](#) the test a move "to distract the world's attention from its troops in Russia, demonstrate themselves as larger than

life, or gain diplomatic leverage amid the US presidential election." PRC Ambassador Fu Cong traced the peninsula security problem to a lack of US-DPRK "mutual trust," and blamed US military expansion for threatening Chinese and regional security.

Talks between PRC and ROK nuclear envoys Liu Xiaoming and Lee Jun-il on the sidelines of the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue in Tokyo on May 9 released no results. As Troy Stangarone at the Korea Economic Institute indicated, the April expiration of the mandate for the UN Panel of Experts on North Korea called into [question](#) the future of nuclear diplomacy. At a post-US election [forum](#) in Seoul, Trump's former envoy Joseph Yun anticipated that Kim Jong Un is unlikely to resume denuclearization talks with Washington given stronger DPRK capabilities and Russian support.

### China-ROK Economic Diplomacy and Trade Reset

China regained its position as South Korea's biggest export market in January-July after ROK exports to the United States surpassed China's share in April-June 2023. A 38% decline in memory chip exports to China last year contributed to South Korea's first trade deficit with China since 1992. By December 2024, a recovery in semiconductor exports injected more optimism into South Korea's trade [performance](#). But the declining rate of ROK export growth from August implied longer-term concerns.



Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok speaks during the 18th Korea-China Meeting on Economic Cooperation held virtually with Zheng Shanjie, chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission, on May 16, 2024, in this photo provided by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. (PHOTO /Yonhap)

Agreements between President Yoon and Premier Li in May included the launching of a senior-level trade dialogue, resumption of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of FTA talks to promote the services sector, and revival of a bilateral investment cooperation committee after a 13-year pause.



President Yoon Suk Yeol (R) and Chinese Premier Li Qiang pose for a photo during their meeting at the presidential office in Seoul on May 26, 2024. (PHOTO /Yonhap)

The latest meeting of trade officials on Nov. 28 in Yancheng supported such priorities and facilitated a China-ROK business forum on the sidelines to explore new opportunities. Supply chain stability remained a top focus of bilateral economic diplomacy from May. China's National Development and Reform Commission chairman Zheng Shangjie and ROK Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok led the 18<sup>th</sup> China-ROK Meeting on Economic Cooperation online on May 16. Choi pointed to a critical [time](#) for managing supply chains to "jointly lead the global industry," citing raw materials and critical minerals, and new industries like clean energy. South Korea's trade ministry announced new bilateral talks on July 11 "[aimed](#) at exchanging opinions on export controls." The initiative complemented director general-level economic talks in Beijing on July 29, an exchange led by China's Commerce Ministry and South Korea's Foreign Ministry since 1993.

### Regional Economic Security and Unfair Play

US-China technology competition and China's e-commerce practices continued to drive China-ROK economic frictions. As US-China "[protectionist moves](#)" loomed over South Korea's export recovery path, the latest exchange of the [tightest](#)-yet export [controls](#) under Xi and Biden drew mixed responses from South Korea. The trade ministry quickly projected limited repercussions for Korean

semiconductors, [reassuring](#) the public on Seoul's close coordination with Washington. Korean analysts [suggested](#) the barriers to China's technology advancement could boost South Korea's competitiveness, but also lower future Chinese demand and raise dependence on the US market. Ahead of US elections, a *Korea Herald* editorial summarized worsening [fears](#) in the shifting chip market: "Previously, roles were clearly assigned: the US led chip design; Europe excelled in related equipment; Korea and Taiwan spearheaded chip production for the global market; and China consumed the final chip products. This old chip production structure is now expected to undergo a wave of drastic changes now that the US is pivoting to "friendshoring" to keep China's technology advance at bay."

Such structural shifts framed Beijing and Seoul's clashes over economic security and coercive diplomacy since the 2016-2017 THAAD dispute. During June 2+2 talks, Chinese officials opposed "turning economic issues into political or security ones," and "all forms of trade protectionism." ROK Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun joined US and Japanese partners a week later in Washington to [launch](#) trilateral cooperation addressing "a wide range of non-market policies and practices" and "the weaponization of economic dependencies on certain supply sources for strategic goods." South Korean [opinion](#) in May focused on the heightened need to manage mineral import reliance given "China's strategic use of its core material resources as a geopolitical tool."

Frictions over "unfair" practices also heated up in e-commerce. South Korea's Fair Trade Commission (FTC) announced on May 13 the signing of voluntary agreements with AliExpress and Temu to address hazardous Chinese products and protect Korean consumers. By late November, the FTC ordered the online retailers to revise terms and conditions violating Korean legal standards on personal data protection and consumer compensation. Online purchases from China drove an annual 28% growth in direct overseas purchases by Korean consumers to 6.8 trillion won (\$4.9 billion) in 2023, when China represented half of South Korea's total overseas purchases. But the volume of user complaints about product quality and services has soared with China's rapid expansion into the Korean market.

Against such consumer frustrations, the Xi-Yoon summit highlighted China's granting of

visa-free entry to South Koreans in early November, its first such move since 1992, as an immediate indicator favoring friendship through cultural exchanges. Xi “especially” [welcomed](#) more youth exchanges, and expressed hopes for more steps to boost China-ROK travel from the Korean side. Foreign Minister Cho also told Wang in May that freer access to cultural content would “help [bridge](#) the emotional gap between the youths of the two countries.” But China’s recent visa exemption drew cautious reactions in South Korea amid geopolitical uncertainties. While some [supported](#) the effort to mitigate recent strain, skeptics called China’s “[sudden](#) visa waiver” a strategic act to counter US influence, called for Seoul’s “prudent diplomacy,” and cautioned that reciprocal benefits to China require balancing economic gains and “less than favorable” public attitudes.



President Yoon Suk Yeol (L) shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping during their meeting at a hotel in Lima, Peru, on Nov. 16, 2024, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. (PHOTO /Yonhap)

### Resumption of China-DPRK Trade and Repatriation

Post-pandemic reopening and increased trade with China and Russia drove North Korea’s economic recovery, as South Korean data [showed](#) in July. After negative economic growth from 2020, North Korea marked 3% growth in 2023, a doubling of exports to \$0.33 billion, and 71% growth in imports to \$2.44 billion. Trade with China constituted 83% of total DPRK trade last year. As the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy [indicated](#) in March, although remaining below 2018-2019 pre-pandemic levels, trade with China grew by more than 120% in 2023 to \$2.29 billion, including \$2 billion in imports and \$0.29 billion in exports. Friendship Year initiatives also supported the resumption of China-DPRK people exchange. Student

exchange programs resumed with the [arrival](#) of more than 80 PRC government scholarship and self-funded students in North Korea by May. The Chinese students represented the first foreign students to enter the country since North Korea’s August 2023 border reopening.

Global attention sharpened most importantly on China’s resumption of the forced repatriation of DPRK defectors, identified as illegal “economic immigrants.” Seoul repeated its requests for Chinese support though this year’s high-level meetings. In May, Foreign Minister Cho [shared](#) “domestic and international concerns” with Wang Yi, calling for “China’s special attention and cooperation to ensure that North Korean defectors are not repatriated against their will.” Seoul continued to push the human rights issue on the UN Security Council agenda by linking Pyongyang’s weapons development and human rights violations. ROK Ambassador Hwang Joon-kook [said](#) at a June 12 meeting: “If human rights violations stop, nuclear weapons development will also stop...This is why we need to look at the DPRK human rights situation from the perspective of international peace and security.” As Security Council president that month, he also delivered a joint statement by 57 UN member-states and the EU delegation calling for stronger collaborative action. China’s deputy representative Geng Shuang maintained that the UN Security Council “should not intervene in country-specific human rights issues...We’ve always opposed the politicization of human rights issues or using human rights as a pretext to exert pressure on other countries.”

Amid Seoul’s China-ROK-Japan summit preparations in May, various reports on China’s repatriations raised public calls for stronger diplomacy. A May 7 *Korea Times* editorial [argued](#) China “should pay more attention to improving its global reputation” as a UN Security Council permanent member and “major trading nation,” and called on the Yoon government to “adopt a more assertive approach and urge China to cease such improper actions.” Recent trends extend pessimism on Chinese cooperation. North Korea’s growing isolation poses a key challenge to South Korea’s rising activism, as Seoul’s UN Human Rights Office representative James Heenan [indicated](#) in May. Reports in June of North Korea’s construction of walls within the Demilitarized Zone affirmed [views](#) of tightening regime control against external influences. At a July CSIS [event](#), ROK Unification Minister Yung Ho-kim pointed to

the rising forces of South Korean popular culture against the DPRK regime's *juche* culture of self-reliance, to promote cultural tools of influence. Such engagement strategies raised Chinese unease over threats to DPRK sovereignty. Citing President Yoon's Oct. 9 [Singapore Lecture](#) on unification, Wang Junsheng at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [criticized](#) Yoon's intensified "ideological offensive" "to influence DPRK citizens" as a leading driver of escalating peninsula tensions.

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of China-DPRK relations heightened Beijing's challenge of promoting its global image while also consolidating its traditional friendship with Pyongyang. Mounting global criticism last year, in response to China's October 2023 repatriation of more than 500 DPRK defectors, raised hope for constraining China's actions. In August, the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [urged](#) China and North Korea to take steps to address the issue, after finding the case to be an "arbitrary deprivation of liberty" violating human rights norms. As Human Rights Watch [reported](#) in May, Beijing has detained more than 90 North Koreans since January, and forcibly repatriated more than 670 since Pyongyang's 2020 border closure. China's repatriation of about 60 North Koreans from Jilin and Liaoning on April 26, two weeks after China's top legislator Zhao Leji met Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang, affirmed fears of increased repatriations.

### Post-2025 Prospects for China-Korea Relations

Beijing-Seoul dialogue efforts this year recharged their "[strategic cooperative partnership](#)" forged in 2008 under Hu Jintao and South Korea's conservative Lee Myung-bak administration, intended to expand ties to regional and global levels. China's Korea watchers [saw](#) "multiple positive signals" this year of Yoon's shifting China policy "beyond bilateral significance." South Korea's hosting of APEC 2025 raises much anticipation over a possible visit by Xi Jinping next year. But even Korean advocates of [practical diplomacy](#) cautioned, "President Yoon needs to moderate the speed of getting along with China" given the "mishaps" of previous administrations since Park Geun-hye, whose engagement with Xi from 2013 yielded a short-lived peak in partnership. Advancing the China-ROK partnership will require maintaining state and

public diplomacy initiatives, delinking regional economic and security strategies, and avoiding discursive clashes on ideological differences.

The November election of Trump marked a critical juncture in China-Korea relations. On the security front, supporters of [thawing](#) China-ROK relations after the Xi-Yoon summit suggested "strengthening ties with Beijing could serve as a hedge against potential disruptions in the US-South Korea alliance." Yoon's media remarks on the G20 sidelines, indicating that relations with China and the United States is not "a case of choosing one country or the other," [signaled](#) a major shift in his US alliance-centered foreign policy. While [cautioning](#) against "third party" influences, PRC Ambassador Xing Haiming in May agreed that "South Korea's efforts to develop ties with the US, and also with China, do not go against one another." Sharpened by the Xi-Putin summit, Yoon's domestic criticism in May already projected an "inevitable" policy turn raised by [voices](#) favoring a "balanced" security approach. The June Kim-Putin summit raised Beijing and Seoul's shared unease about Pyongyang's tightening military ties with Russia. But the impending return of Trump's "America First" revealed deeper South Korean anxieties about "choosing sides" on key priorities like [Taiwan](#), and the security risks posed by Trump's hardliners on China for resolving the [North Korean](#) nuclear issue.

The downward adjustments in South Korean growth projections after Trump's November election reflected even stronger pessimism about the risks from US economic policy. As the presidential [office](#) reported after assessing the potential impact of Trump's tariff plans, "A decline in China's exports to the U.S. could affect Korea's intermediate goods exports to China and may also intensify competition in third-country markets." Korean public opinion captured the worsening economic outlook featuring ripple effects from [US protectionism](#), the direct trade impact of [technology](#) restrictions on China, and wider repercussions from Chinese economic [slowdown](#). From such perspectives, US-China competition dampens South Korea's export drive if it is "[forced](#) to join a messy trade battle." The Korea International Trade Association identified Trump's tariff threats as the biggest risk facing ROK export recovery. A South Korean survey [found](#) that more than 80% of Korean companies expect Trump's protectionist policy to hurt the Korean

economy, while less than 8% think his China policy would benefit it. Such pessimism is amplified by an increasingly challenging foreign investment environment in China, where ROK direct investment dropped by 78% in 2022-2023 to \$1.87 billion. One scholar [affirmed](#) in November, “China is country where political logic is strong...one cannot merely trust China as a business partner based purely on economic logic.”

Regaining trust at both state and societal levels remains a top priority for Beijing and Seoul. During his June meeting with former ROK Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan in Beijing, Wang expressed [hopes](#) for Korean efforts “to promote a correct understanding of China in the ROK society.” As South Korea’s Ambassador to China Chung Jae-ho [argued](#) in 2012 during the transition to China’s Xi era, “the wealthier and stronger China becomes, the larger the perceptual disparity may grow between China and its regional neighbors, including South Korea.” South Korea’s internal political turmoil compounds the geopolitical and economic risks from US-China competition under Trump. While Beijing [declined](#) commenting on Korean “domestic affairs,” the Chinese state media [saw](#) Yoon’s Dec. 3 imposition of martial law as a sign of “serious divisions in ROK politics.”

In conclusion, I want to thank Rob York, Brad Glosserman, Ralph Cossa, Carl Baker, and especially Scott Snyder for the valuable opportunity to contribute to *Comparative Connections* since 2008.



# CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS

## MAY-NOVEMBER 2024

**May 3, 2024:** PRC Vice Finance Minister Liao Min, ROK Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, and Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki meet on the sidelines of the 27<sup>th</sup> ASEAN+3 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governor's Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia.

**May 9, 2024:** PRC and ROK nuclear envoys meet on the sidelines of the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue in Tokyo.

**May 13-14, 2024:** ROK Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul [visits](#) Beijing for talks with PRC counterpart Wang Yi.

**May 13, 2024:** South Korea's Fair-Trade Commission, AliExpress, and Temu chiefs sign consumer safety agreements in Seoul.

**May 16, 2024:** China's NDRC chairman Zheng Shangjie and ROK Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok [virtually hold](#) the 18<sup>th</sup> China-ROK Meeting on Economic Cooperation.

**May 16, 2024:** PRC and ROK police chiefs hold talks in Beijing.

**May 22, 2024:** PRC Embassy in Seoul condemns a lawmaker of South Korea's ruling People Power Party for attending Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's inauguration.

**May 22, 2024:** Director General of the PRC Foreign Ministry Department of Asian Affairs Liu Jinsong meets Minister of the ROK Embassy in China Kim Hankyu.

**May 26, 2024:** ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol and PRC Premier Li Qiang [meet](#) in Seoul.

**May 27, 2024:** Ninth China-ROK-Japan trilateral summit is held in Seoul.

**Jun. 15, 2024:** PRC, ROK, and Japanese education ministers hold trilateral talks in Seoul.

**Jun. 18, 2024:** China and South Korea [hold](#) 2+2 diplomatic security talks.

**Jun. 19-20, 2024:** Jiangsu party secretary Xin Changxing visits South Korea.

**Jun. 29, 2024:** PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi and former ROK Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan meet in Beijing.

**Jul. 11, 2024:** The first China-ROK talks on export controls are held in Beijing.

**Jul. 11, 2024:** Beijing and Pyongyang commemorate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the signing of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance.

**Jul. 24, 2024:** Tenth China-ROK Vice Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue is held in Seoul.

**Jul. 26, 2024:** Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Cho Tae-yul meet in Laos on the sidelines of ASEAN forums.

**Jul. 29, 2024:** PRC and ROK foreign ministries hold director general-level economic talks in Beijing.

**Aug. 7, 2024:** ROK Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Chung Byung-won meets Gansu Province's Deputy Party Secretary Shi Moujun in Seoul.

**Aug. 20, 2024:** PRC Vice Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong meets a South Korean youth delegation visiting China led by Korea Foundation Executive Vice President Lee Jong-kook.

**Sep. 9, 2024:** Xi Jinping sends a message to Kim Jong Un for the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the DPRK's founding.

**Sep. 23, 2024:** A Chinese foreign ministry delegation for the 2024 China-ROK Future-Oriented Exchange Program meets Deputy Minister for Political Affairs Chung Byung-won at the ROK Foreign Ministry.

**Oct. 6, 2024:** Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un exchange messages marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China-DPRK diplomatic ties.

**Oct. 26, 2024:** China, Japan, and South Korea open the Seminar Commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Trilateral Cooperation in Changchun.

**Oct. 28, 2024:** PRC Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs of the ROK Foreign Ministry Chung Byung-won, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Funakoshi Takehiro, and Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat Secretary-General Lee Hee-sup hold the China-ROK-Japan senior officials' meeting in Tokyo. The three foreign ministry representatives collectively meet Japanese Foreign Minister Iwaya Takeshi.

**Nov. 15, 2024:** Presidents Xi and Yoon [meet](#) in Lima on the sidelines of the 31<sup>st</sup> APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting.

**Nov. 21, 2024:** China and South Korea participate in the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus in Vientiane .

**Nov. 22, 2024:** China's foreign ministry announces extension of visa-free travel for South Koreans from 15 to 30 days.

**Nov. 24, 2024:** PRC and ROK culture ministers meet in Shanghai.

**Nov. 28, 2024:** PRC and ROK trade officials meet in Seoul.

**Nov. 29, 2024:** Chinese and Russian military aircraft enters South Korea's air defense identification zone.

**Nov. 29, 2024:** The ROK Embassy in China announces a Dec. 10 farewell ceremony for Ambassador Chung Jae-ho.