



NK Update for September 2021

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The Korean Peninsula and China in September

Upon Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Korea and the third anniversary of the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, the ROK government has made diplomatic efforts to reignite the peace process on the peninsula. Nonetheless, North Korea's new long-range cruise missile and short-range ballistic missile launches have once raised concerns regarding tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, China and North Korea have taken a double-sided approach on the Korean Peninsula, adding a complex layer to resolving issues on the peninsula. While China promised to cooperate with South Korea on inter-Korean issues, Wang Yi stated that "not only North Korea, but other countries are also engaged in military action," implying support regarding North Korea's ballistic missile launch. The Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that it will take a principle-based position of a "dual-track approach" and North Korea launched missiles during its visit to Korea while showing off traditional friendly relations by exchanging congratulatory messages on the establishment of the North Korean regime with China.

Xi Jinping sends a congratulatory message to Kim Jong Un to emphasize friendly relations in the wake of the establishment of the North Korean regime

On September 9, 2021, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un on the 73rd anniversary of the Day of the Foundation of the Republic, stressing and strengthening friendly relations between China and the DPRK. According to an article by [Xinhua News Agency](#), Xi stated that "over the past 73 years since the DPRK's founding, the WPK has united and led the DPRK people to make relentless efforts and achieve great successes in advancing the socialist cause," and that he is "ready to work with Kim to promote bilateral friendly and cooperative relations for steady and sustained development and lift the ties to higher levels, so as to create more

benefits for both countries and their people,” emphasizing friendly relations.

State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi Visits Korea

From September 14-15, State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi made a visit to Seoul to attend the ROK-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and pay a courtesy call to President Moon Jae In. At the meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, the Foreign Ministry reported that Chung and Wang exchanged views on bilateral relations and issues on the Korean Peninsula. According to the ministry’s press release, both sides decided to strengthen strategic communication between top officials of the two countries, sympathize with the urgency of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, and pursue close cooperation between South Korea and China to restart the peace process on the Korean Peninsula early. Wang Yi stated that he consistently supports the South Korean government's efforts to promote inter-Korean relations, hoped to resume inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation as soon as possible, and that he will play a constructive role in building peace and stability in the area and the Korean Peninsula. Both sides agreed to push for face-to-face consultations between nuclear envoys to follow up on this meeting. Regarding North Korea’s launch of missiles, both ministers shared the situation of the projectile launch and confirmed that such military measures do not aid inter-Korean relations. Wang said, "Related countries should refrain, in order to prevent one-sided military actions to lead to a vicious cycle in the situation on the Korean Peninsula."

According to the Blue House news briefing, Minister Wang Yi met President Moon Jae-in this day. President Moon noted the importance of developing ROK-China relations and expressed his hopes for stronger bilateral relations. Minister Wang emphasized the importance of Korea for China and cited the Confucian Analects “三十而立,” stating he hopes the two countries will execute their plans well on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and China next year. President Moon emphasized the importance of managing the situation on the Korean Peninsula in a stable manner and leading North Korea to resume dialogue for complete denuclearization and the establishment of peace on the Peninsula. In response, Wang “reconfirmed that China has always been supportive of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and progress and development in inter-Korean relations and that China intends to continue playing a constructive role going forward.”

North Korea’s Missile Launches and the Position of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

North Korea fired a new long-range cruise missile on September 11 and 12 and two short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea on the 15th. The North conducted its first missile tests in six months since March 25. As the ballistic missile launch took place during Minister Wang Yi’s visit to Korea, with China having significant influence over North Korea, it is worth paying greater attention to the Chinese government's position on the launch.

According to Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's [Regular Press Conference on September 17](#), Zhao stated that China takes a principled position and that China “hope(s) relevant parties will stick to the right path of dialogue and engagement, abandon the old path of hostility and confrontation, and earnestly seek an effective political solution to the Korean Peninsula issue in accordance with the dual-track approach and the principle of phased and synchronized actions.”

On the question of how China views the prospect of the resumption of the Six-Party Talks on the [Regular Press Conference on September 16](#), Zhao stated that “(he) notice(d) that it's few days away from September 19. To be honest, I have not seen the information you mentioned.” However, on the

next day regarding the question on the Six-Party Talks, he stated that the “Six-Party Talks is an effective mechanism for denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and peace and stability of the Peninsula and Northeast Asia as well as an important platform for improving relations among parties” and that “goals set in the talks and the principles of addressing the concerns of all parties in a synchronized, reciprocal and balanced manner are still of guiding significance.” He stated that “all parties concerned should be prudent in words and actions and continue to resolutely advance the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue,” taking a different stance from what he took the day before.

In response to a question on China’s position on the Security Council meeting, he explained that the “UN Security Council discussed relevant issues in its internal consultations and China reiterated its principled position during the meeting.” He also stressed that “China always believes that the Security Council should play a positive and constructive role in ensuring that the Korean Peninsula issue stay on the track of political settlement, and has repeatedly called on the UN Security Council to invoke ‘the rollback terms’ of DPRK-related resolutions as soon as possible and make necessary adjustments to relevant sanctions, especially relating to provisions on the livelihood aspects, so as to create conditions and atmosphere for breaking the current impasse and resuming dialogue.”

Meeting with members of the special delegation who visited North Korea three years ago to mark the third anniversary of Pyongyang Joint Declaration

September 19 marks the third anniversary of the Pyongyang Joint Declaration. At the meeting with members of the special delegation who visited North Korea three years ago, Unification Minister Lee In-young said, “Negotiations and dialogues were stalled three years ago” and that “the government should push forward for the peace on the Korean peninsula with long breathing.” According to the Ministry of Unification, regarding North Korea’s latest missile launches, he expressed his will to reignite inter-Korean cooperation, saying, “I hope that the two Koreas and the U.S. will resume dialogue and cooperation as soon as possible so that discussions on the denuclearization and establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula can begin again though concerns are raised in Korea.” ■

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