

The 10th China-South Korea Academic Symposium

The stable development of China-South Korea relations is of great strategic significance not only for maintaining the regional order but also for achieving the goal of “Building a Community of a Shared Future with Neighboring Countries”. On November 4, 2023, the 10th China-South Korea Academic Symposium, hosted by the Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding (iGCU) at PKU, and U.S.-China Policy Institute at Ajou University, was successfully held at the School of International Studies, PKU.

Over twenty leading experts and scholars from China and South Korea participated in the symposium, discussing “China-South Korea Cooperation Under the New Geopolitical Strategic Background.” The participants explored feasible ways for both countries to enhance mutual trust and strengthen cooperation in these new circumstances.

Opening Ceremony

At the opening ceremony, Prof. **Jia Qingguo** (*Professor at the School of International Studies, PKU; Director of iGCU*) and Prof. **Kim Heung-kyu** (*Director of the U.S.-China Policy Institute, Ajou University, and Chairman of the Plaza Project*) delivered remarks on behalf of the Chinese and Korean scholars, respectively. Prof. **Wang Dong** (*Professor at the School of International Studies, PKU; Executive Director of iGCU*) moderated the event.

In his remarks, Prof. **Jia Qingguo** first shared his thoughts on the current situation of China-U.S. relations and how the bilateral relations would develop in the foreseeable future. He reckoned that in the short run, China-U.S. relations would remain stable and improve to a certain extent. However, the possibility for the twists or tensions to emerge is still high. Prof. Jia noted several suggestions on how China and South Korea could cope with the China-U.S. relationship fraught with tensions. He stressed the importance for China and South Korea to manage conflicts and divergences, increase opportunities to communicate and negotiate, and cooperate on issues in which both sides have common interests. Discussing how China and South Korea should deal with their relations with the U.S., Prof. Jia suggested that the key lies in handling unreasonable requests from the U.S. and practicing autonomous diplomacy.



Prof. **Kim Heung-kyu**'s address introduced the development of the U.S.-China Policy Institute at Ajou University, specifying that the Institute's main research focuses on South Korea-China-U.S. trilateral relations and regional security. Prof. Kim indicated that despite past crises such as the THAAD crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic that affected bilateral ties, communications and academic exchanges between Chinese and South Korean scholars have remained uninterrupted. Both sides have actively sought potential opportunities for cooperation, aiming to enhance mutual understanding. Besides, he emphasized that the U.S.-China Policy Institute aims to exert its influence as a think tank, ultimately contributing to improving and stabilizing bilateral

ties. Prof. Kim further underscored the necessity for scholars of the two countries to continue to engage in more in-depth strategic communications.



Session I: Evaluating and Assessing the Current Global Security Situation

Prof. **Kim Heung-kyu** moderated the first session of the symposium, themed “Evaluating and Assessing the Current Global Security Situation.” Dr. **Lee Sang-Hyun** (*President of the Sejong Institute*) and Prof. **Yu Tiejun** (*President of the Institute of Int’l & Strategic Studies, PKU; Professor of the School of International Studies, PKU*) were the keynote speakers of this session. Gen. **Jung Hae-il** (*Former President of the Korea National Defense University*) and Dr. **Lu Xiao** (*Assistant Professor at the School of International Studies, PKU*) were discussants at the session.

In his speech, Dr. **Lee Sang-Hyun** pointed out three evident characteristics of the current international security situation. First, there is the revival of geopolitics and the resurgence of great power competition, posing challenges to the post-WWII international system and international institutions like the United Nations. Second, there is the exacerbating trend of bloc-based division as countries incessantly restructure their blocs and/or partnerships. Third, global governance is in disarray, marked by more frequent crisis events. Dr. Lee suggested that, given these new changes, South Korea and China should enhance cooperation to prevent potential conflicts and effectively deal with emerging risks.

Prof. **Yu Tiejun** began his speech by analyzing the impacts of the Russo-Ukrainian and the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts on the current international security environment. Prof. Yu stated that these conflicts, along with the food and energy crises and other challenges, have resulted in the gradual deterioration of the international security environment. Echoing Dr. Lee’s remarks, Prof. Yu noted his conviction that, except for the traditional risks like the North Korean nuclear crisis and the Taiwan Strait issue, the trend of bloc-based division had become the new uncertainty that could exacerbate the security dilemma across East Asia. He stressed the necessity for all parties to closely monitor the negative influences that this trend might bring to regional security and take collective measures to cope with future challenges.

During the discussion session, Dr. **Lu Xiao** highlighted several factors increasing uncertainties in international relations and adversely impacting global cooperation, including certain countries’ concerns for supply and industrial chains, the adoption of trade protectionist measures, ongoing global controversies in values, and political changes in the West. Gen. **Jung Hae-il** analyzed U.S.- Japan-South Korea security cooperation from a military perspective. He stressed that, in the event of a North Korean nuclear crisis, strengthening the South Korea-U.S. Alliance might be the only viable choice for South Korea.

Session II: Common Challenges Face by China and South Korea

Session Two of the symposium was tagged “Common Challenges Face by China and South Korea”. Prof. **Lee Myon-woo** (*Vice President of the Sejong Institute*) moderated the second session, while Dr. **Wang Junsheng** (*Director of the Dept. of China’s Regional & Global Strategy Studies at the National Institute of Int’l Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*) and Prof. **Lee Wang-hwi** (*Professor at Ajou University*) were the keynote speakers. Prof. **Li Tingting** (*Associate Professor and Director of the Dept. of Korean Language & Culture at the School of Foreign Languages, PKU*) and Prof. **Lee Dong-min** (*Professor at Dankook University*) were discussants.

In his speech, Dr. **Wang Junsheng** first provided an in-depth analysis of the mutual challenges confronting China and South Korea, including the U.S.’s proactive efforts to intensify great power competition and its interference in Asia-Pacific affairs, and the emergence of extreme conservatives within the South Korean government. Addressing these issues, Prof. Wang suggested that instead of choosing sides, China and South Korea should align their actions with their respective domestic interests and both sides’ mutual interests. He added that China and South Korea should strengthen cooperation in solving the problems on the Korean Peninsula and enhance cooperation in several areas, including think tanks and economics and trade, to maintain the stability of the China-South Korea relationship and facilitate the positive development of their bilateral ties.



Afterwards, Prof. **Lee Wang-hwi** discussed the vast opportunities for win-win cooperation between South Korea and China through an economic lens. Prof. Lee stated that despite South Korea and China's expanded trade and investment over the past decades and the complementary nature of both countries' supply networks, their current economic relations are undergoing competitive changes. These shifts are influenced by factors such as economic cycles, structural problems, and geopolitical factors. Thus, a serious trade deficit and decline in trade volume can occur. In this vein, Prof. Lee suggested that economic cooperation between the two should minimize the geopolitical impact, avoid economic decoupling-induced disruptions, and prevent damage to the regional economy. Specifically, this could be achieved through establishing working groups involving China, the U.S., and South Korea, and engaging in 2+2 dialogues. Additionally, Prof. Lee stressed the importance of enhancing dialogues and communications between scholars and experts from both countries to solve conflicts.

During the discussion session, scholars from both sides engaged in open and insightful dialogue. Prof. **Li Tingting** pointed out that there are trends that exist in the regional situation which contradict the mutual interests of China and South Korea. These trends are evident in politics, diplomacy, and security aspects, and manifest as three paradoxical challenges: the "new Cold War" paradox, the Korean peninsula situation paradox, and the so-called values paradox. She emphasized the imperative for both countries to strengthen policy communication and adjust mutual perceptions. Prof. Lee Dongmin expressed that China-South Korea relations are at a crucial juncture, facing unprecedented challenges. Hence, relentless efforts are required in economic, security, and other domains to improve their ties and seek out the path of coexistence.

Session III: Cooperation between China and South Korea

The third session of the symposium, entitled "Cooperation between China and South Korea," was moderated by Prof. **Kim Heung-kyu**. Dr. **Chung Jae-hung** (*Director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the Sejong Institute*) and Prof. **Cheng Xiaohe** (*Professor at the School of International Studies, Renmin University of China*) were the keynote speakers of this session. Prof. **Park Seong-bin** (*Professor at Ajou University*) and Dr. **Sun Bingyan** (*Vice Director of Rsch. Center for Intellectual Property & Technological Security, University of Int'l Relations; iGCU Non-Resident Fellow*) participated in the discussion session.

Dr. **Chung Jae-hung** highlighted in his speech that the China-South Korea relationship is significant in the changing global landscape, especially given the emergence of a multipolar international order and the rise of emerging powers like the 'Global South'. By specifying the existing security risks in Northeast Asia, Dr. Chung emphasized the necessity of establishing a new regional security order. He further proposed South Korea maintain a balanced and stable relationship with China, and the two countries should encourage more communication and dialogue to prevent the already tense situation from further escalating.

In his remarks, Prof. **Cheng Xiaohe** pointed out that while China-South Korea relations achieved remarkable progress in the past, recent years have seen the rise of divergences and conflicts hindering the further development of bilateral ties. For example, tense economic and socio-political relations exist between China and South Korea, intensifying negative impressions between the two peoples. Prof. Cheng suggested the two countries should take action to improve the current situation, proposing several ways to enhance their ties, including the two countries (and their peoples) exercising restraint and avoiding conflicts. He emphasized that the media should shoulder its responsibility and avoid irrationally inciting nationalist sentiments. He also stated that restoring communication and exchanges between both countries is crucial for resolving conflicts.

During the discussion session, Prof. **Park Seong-bin** underscored that China and South Korea can achieve a "win-win" cooperation in various fields. He advocated for strengthening China-South Korea cooperation on economic and security, believing that through active efforts of both sides, the room for cooperation could be further expanded. Dr. **Sun Bingyan** expressed his belief that an inherent connection exists between the people of China and South Korea due to their similar cultural backgrounds, generating mutual understanding and respect. Thus, Dr. Sun suggested that the two countries should work closer together and explore new areas for cooperation.



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Closing Remarks

Toward the end of the symposium, Dr. **Lee Sang-Hyun** and Prof. **Chu Xiaobo** (*Professor and Party Secretary of the School of International Studies, PKU*) delivered closing remarks on behalf of the Korean and Chinese scholars, respectively. Dr. Lee reckoned that given the current circumstances with the emergence of numerous risks, it becomes extremely vital for China and South Korea to improve their diplomatic, security, and economic relations. Both countries should enhance mutual understanding

based on mutual respect and trust and collaborate to cope with future challenges. Thus, organizing this symposium at this particular time is of great significance. In light of the current global situation, where humanity is amid ‘great changes unseen in a century’, Prof. Chu noted that China and South Korea should investigate how to resolve conflicts and strengthen cooperation. Both countries should think about the bilateral relations from a more strategic perspective, with a more responsible attitude. Prof. Chu further emphasized that China-South Korea relations are more than just bilateral relations as the development of their ties would directly affect peace in not only the Korean peninsula and East Asia but also the entire Asia-Pacific region. Prof. Chu stressed that the School of International Studies at Peking University would continue to show full support for academic exchange events organized by iGCU and contribute to efforts to improve the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The closing session of the symposium was moderated by Prof. Wang Dong. Prof. Wang emphasized that China and South Korea should continue to build platforms for communication, work to facilitate the development of bilateral ties, and contribute to maintaining peace, prosperity, and stability in Northeast Asia.