



10 June 2026

CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S TWO DAY (JUNE 8-9) VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

by JAYADEVA RANADE

Chinese President Xi Jinping accompanied by his wife Peng Liyuan, Politburo Standing Committee member and Director of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (CC) General Office Cai Qi, Politburo member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Defence Minister Dong Jun and other Chinese officials arrived in Pyongyang on June 8 on a two-day state visit. North Korean President and General Secretary of the Korean Worker's Party (KWP) Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Soi Ju received them at the airport.

The grand welcome included children holding balloons and a cavalry escort lined up to welcome Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan. A military band played a welcome tune. Kim Jong Un and his wife, Ri Sol Ju, greeted them and the leaders of the two parties and two countries stepped onto the reviewing stand together while the military band played the national anthems of China and the DPRK. Xi Jinping received a 21-gun salute. Later Kim Jong Un and his wife, Ri Sol Ju accompanied Xi Jinping and his wife by car to the Kumsusan Guest House, where Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan stayed.

People's Daily (June 8) reported that Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with Kim Jong Un, General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission, on June 8, at the Kumsusan Guesthouse in Pyongyang. It said Xi Jinping pointed out that he was very pleased and felt particularly warm to visit the beautiful Pyongyang again after seven years. He expressed his willingness to use this visit as an opportunity to strengthen the 'top-level design and strategic guidance of China-DPRK relations in the new era', promote the development of China-DPRK relations in keeping with the times, better benefit the two countries and their people, and make positive contributions to regional and even global peace, stability, development and prosperity. Xi Jinping emphasized that China and North Korea are both socialist countries led by communist parties. The traditional friendship between China and North Korea is rooted in their shared ideals, beliefs, and goals, and boasts a profound historical foundation, a solid political base, and strong emotional ties. Generational friendship, shared destiny, and mutual assistance have always been distinctive features of China-North Korea relations. No matter how the international situation changes, the firm stance of the Chinese Party and government in attaching great importance to the traditional friendship between China and North Korea will not change, its firm support for General Secretary Kim Jong Un's leadership of the socialist cause in North Korea will not change, and its firm determination to safeguard the common interests and favourable strategic environment of both sides will not change. Xi Jinping said both sides should take a long-term perspective and build on past achievements to draw wisdom from the

development of relations between the two parties and countries, seize opportunities in the general trend of human history, inject new contemporary connotations and strong impetus into the traditional friendship between China and North Korea, and open up a brighter future for the socialist cause of the two countries and for regional peace and development.

Xi Jinping put forward four points for developing China-North Korea relations. He said: (i) we must uphold high-level exchanges as the guiding principle to solidify the foundation of political mutual trust. The strategic guidance of the top leader is the greatest advantage of China-DPRK relations. I am willing to maintain close strategic communication with General Secretary Xi Jinping to guide China-DPRK relations to new heights. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between China and the DPRK, and both sides should hold grand commemorative activities. Party-to-party relations play an important guiding role in the development of China-DPRK relations. We should further expand and invigorate friendly exchanges between the two parties at all levels and in all fields, and deepen exchanges and mutual learning on party governance and national governance experience. Both sides should strengthen exchanges in diplomacy, law enforcement, and the military, and implement the important consensus reached between General Secretary Kim Jong Un and me, pooling wisdom and strength for the development of China-DPRK relations; (ii) China is willing to strengthen the alignment of development strategies with North Korea and expand pragmatic cooperation in areas such as trade, agriculture, construction, science and technology, and healthcare, so as to better benefit the people of both countries. Both sides should take the full reopening of border crossings and the resumption of civil aviation flights and international passenger trains as opportunities to expand people-to-people exchanges and achieve two-way travel; (iii) The traditional friendship between China and North Korea, forged in blood, is a precious shared asset of both peoples. "China is willing to work with North Korea to safeguard and manage the memorial facilities for the martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army in North Korea, conduct distinctive revolutionary tradition education and ideological education for young people, and pass on the red genes and traditional friendship between our two countries". China is also willing to work with North Korea to make good use of our respective advantages and resources, strengthen exchanges and cooperation in education, arts, tourism, sports, media, youth, local areas, and sister cities, and make the traditional friendship between China and North Korea even more deeply rooted in the hearts of the people; (iv) we must uphold the principles of fairness and justice and enrich the content of strategic cooperation. Xi Jinping proposed the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and four global initiatives, hoping to promote global governance in a more just and equitable direction. These initiatives have received widespread support and positive responses from the international community, including North Korea. Asia is the foundation for the survival and development of China, North Korea, and other regional countries. China and North Korea should strengthen strategic coordination and cooperation, firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty, security, and development interests, and jointly maintain regional peace and development.

Kim Jong Un stated that General Secretary Xi Jinping's visit to North Korea after seven years is a highly respected guest of the North Korean people, and we extend our warmest and most solemn welcome. General Secretary Xi Jinping's first overseas trip this year to Pyongyang demonstrates the high importance he attaches to North Korea-China relations and the strong

friendship between the two countries, which is a great encouragement to North Korea. This visit once again clearly demonstrates how unbreakable the long-tested North Korea-China relationship, which has always stood on the right side of history, upholding independence and justice. The special nature of North Korea and China lies not only in being neighbours, but also in the deep traditional friendship and shared ideals and beliefs that both sides cherish and pass on from generation to generation. Kim Jong Un stated that since his meeting with General Secretary Xi Jinping in Beijing last September, bilateral relations have developed actively in various fields, bringing tangible benefits to the people of both countries. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to General Secretary Xi Jinping for his important suggestions on the development of DPRK-China relations in the new era. He pledged that all DPRK departments will work with their Chinese counterparts to fully implement these suggestions, promote new developments in exchanges and cooperation across a wide range of fields, including trade, infrastructure, science and technology, education, and culture, and strengthen exchanges and mutual learning through party-to-party channels to provide valuable assistance to the development of DPRK's socialist construction, helping the DPRK people to embark on the path of modernization alongside the Chinese people.

Kim Jong Un added that the DPRK is pleased to see that, under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping, China has achieved remarkable development achievements that have astonished the world, and its international standing has been greatly enhanced. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind and the four global initiatives proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping have profound significance for promoting world peace and development. The DPRK will unswervingly adhere to the one-China principle and firmly support China's policies and positions on safeguarding its core interests. Consolidating and developing the DPRK-China friendship in the new era is the choice of the people, the need of the times, and the DPRK's unchanging strategic choice and unwavering strategic will. We will, as always, regard the development of DPRK-China relations as the most important and primary strategic undertaking of the country, and do our utmost to build DPRK-China relations into a model of state-to-state relations, jointly contributing to regional and global peace and prosperity.

Chinese Politburo Standing Committee member Cai Qi, Politburo member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Defence Minister Dong Jun and others participated in the talks.

Coinciding with Xi Jinping's arrival in Pyongyang, on June 8, North Korea's official newspaper the Rodong Sinmun published Chinese President Xi Jinping's signed article captioned "Carrying Forward the Past and Opening Up the Future, Forging Ahead Together, and Writing a New Chapter in the Traditional Friendship between China and the DPRK". The People's Daily (June 8) also published a special article captioned 'To promote greater development of China-North Korea relations in keeping with the times' to mark the visit.

On June 8 evening at 7pm, Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan attended a welcoming banquet hosted by Kim Jong Un at the Mokran Hall in Pyongyang. On the way to the Mulan Pavilion, "enthusiastic" people dressed in traditional ethnic costumes lined the route to welcome Xi Jinping's motorcade. The banquet hall of the Mulan Pavilion was decorated with lanterns and colourful flowers, exuding a festive and joyous atmosphere. They were warmly greeted by Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju. Both leaders delivered speeches at the banquet. Cai Qi,

Wang Yi, and others attended the banquet. Later that evening at 9pm Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan together with Kim Jong Un and Ri Sol Ju attended a special cultural performance “with people from all walks of life” in Pyongyang at the Pyongyang Gymnasium.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his entourage returned to Beijing on June 9. Beijing Daily (June 9) noted that Kim Jong Un and his wife saw them off at the airport. People's Daily (June 9) stated that prior to leaving Pyongyang, Xi Jinping attended a farewell ceremony hosted by Kim Jong Un. Xi Jinping and his wife also attended a small luncheon hosted by Kim Jong Un and his wife. At approximately 10.40am, Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan arrived by car at the China-North Korea Friendship Tower located at the foot of Moranbong Hill, where they were greeted by Kim Jong Un and Ri Sol Ju. The North Korean military band played the national anthems of China and North Korea. Honour guards slowly carried a flower basket onto the platform. The ribbon on the flower basket read, "Eternal Glory to the Martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army." Later at 11am, Xi Jinping visited the Central Cadre School of the Workers' Party of Korea. Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan paid homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower. On June 9, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un jointly planted a fir tree, shoveling soil and watering it. The evergreen fir tree symbolizes the enduring friendship between China and North Korea. People's Daily recalled that seven years ago, Xi Jinping vividly compared the China-North Korea relationship to a "towering tree." "May the friendship between China and North Korea last forever!"

This is Xi Jinping's first visit in 7 years to the DPRK after the one in 2019 and his second state visit. It coincided with the 65th anniversary of the signing of the China-North Korea Treaty of Amity and Mutual Assistance. Interestingly, the People's Daily reporting showed that while mentioning Xi Jinping's proposal of "the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and four global initiatives", Kim Jong Un omitted mention of “hoping to promote global governance in a more just and equitable direction”. Also both leaders underscored their warm traditional relationship and stressed Party-to-Party relations, but avoided reference to it being “forged in blood” or reverting to the decades old reference of it being like “lips to teeth”.

This is an important visit for China, which would be uncomfortable with the growing proximity between Russia and the DPRK. Distance has also grown between China and North Korea as evidenced by China trying, at the instance also of the US, to restrain Pyongyang from developing long range nuclear capable missiles. In what has been interpreted by some analysts as embarrassing to Xi Jinping, on June 7, Kim Jong Un's younger sister Kim Yo-jong published a signed article in the Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the Workers' Party of Korea, using unusually strong language and declaring that North Korea's status as a nuclear-armed state is "irreversible" and "absolutely non-negotiable", and “no country has the right to interfere in its affairs”. According to one report the US is known to have asked Xi Jinping to help reopen talks with Kim Jong Un.

It is likely also that Xi Jinping raised the issue of the completion of a land bridge linking the North Korean city of Hyesan with the Russian border town of Hassan on the entryway to the Vladivostok region. While this facilitates Russia's supply lines to North Korea in time of war, it can also provide China with an entry to the Sea of Japan. Xi Jinping could have discussed

China's using this passageway for trade. It is not known what concession Kim Jong Un would have asked China in return.

Xi Jinping's visit is undoubtedly a bid to strengthen ties with North Korea. He repeatedly used terms like "strategic guidance at the highest level," "strategic coordination" and "strategic communication" in his article in the Rodong Sinmun but that does not seem to have evoked a matching response. Nonetheless Xi Jinping did identify numerous areas of cooperation including people-to-people ties which would benefit the DPRK and it appears that bilateral economic ties would strengthen.

(The author is President of the Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.)

