



China's Korean Peninsula Policy Enters an Adjustment Period

——Restructuring Relationships With North and South Korea

Jiang Longfan

Professor, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, China

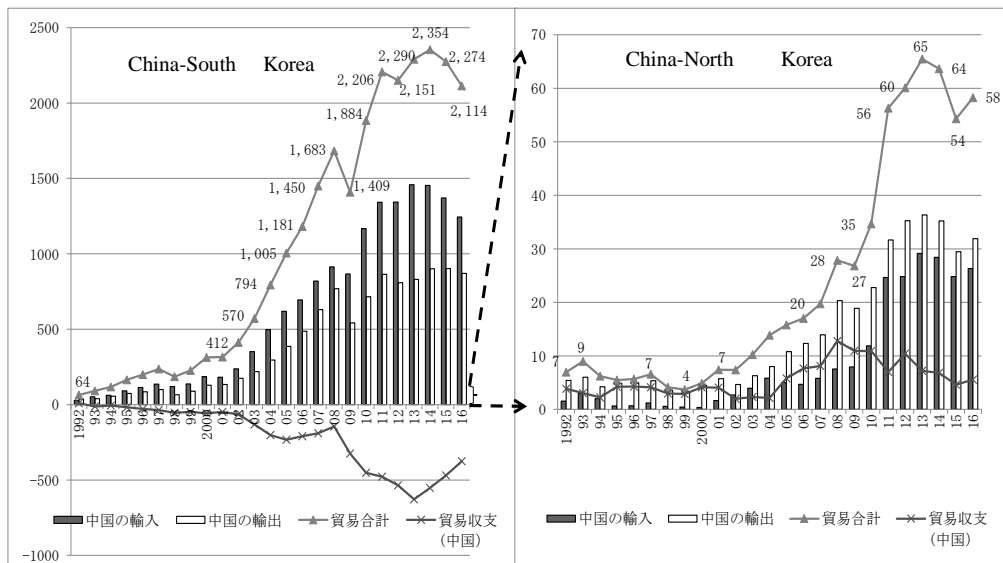
[Key Points]

- China faces a dilemma: how to protect its strategic interests within the narrow confines of a situation in which the formation of an alliance between Japan, the USA, and South Korea is gathering pace, while also fulfilling its ethical duty as a “responsible major power” to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue.
- Just as relations between China and South Korea were regarded as being at an all-time high, the 2016 decision to deploy the US military’s state-of-the-art Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system on South Korean soil triggered a growing sense of mutual distrust, leading to a “transposition” of China-South Korea and Japan-South Korea relations. One could say that China’s policy on the Korean Peninsula has entered an adjustment period.
- China needs a fresh approach in its Korean Peninsula policy. As well as avoiding its dilemma by proactively mediating in efforts to improve inter-Korean relations, China must take positive steps to rebuild its channels for dialogue with North Korea based on a stance of opposition to the North Korean nuclear program and strive to ensure that it holds the strategic trump card in order to resolve the Korean Peninsula issue.



Key Data

Chinese Trade With North and South Korea (Unit: \$100 million)



China: Imports

China: Exports

Total Trade

Trade Balance (China)

Source: Figures for China-South Korea are from the Korea International Trade Association; figures for China-North Korea trade are from China Customs Statistics