

# Weekly China Insight

## Beijing, 09 January 2026

### **China condemns US raid on Venezuela and reaffirms commitment to energy ties**

On 5 January, following the US military operation that resulted in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, China strongly condemned what it called the “blatant use of force” and a “serious violation of international law.” Beijing reaffirmed its commitment to Venezuela as a strategic partner, particularly in energy cooperation, emphasizing that bilateral ties are “based on equality and mutual benefit” and protected by both international and domestic legal frameworks. Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons Lin Jian and Mao Ning criticized Washington’s actions as hegemonic and destabilizing, warning that unilateral interventions threaten peace in Latin America and the global energy supply chain. Chinese commerce ministry officials reiterated that China’s desire to deepen economic ties with Venezuela would not change “regardless of how Venezuela’s political situation shifts.”

Despite US President Donald Trump’s pledge to maintain oil sales to China after seizing control of Venezuela’s oil sector, Beijing has demanded the immediate release of Maduro and his wife, asserting that no state can place its domestic laws above international norms.

*China’s unequivocal condemnation of US action underscores its strategic interest in defending the sovereignty of partner countries and securing long-term access to energy resources, while also challenging the US reassertion of geopolitical dominance in Latin America.*

### **China rejects US threats to seize Greenland, urging respect for international law**

On 7 January, the Chinese foreign ministry firmly criticized the United States after the Trump administration confirmed it was considering the use of military force to acquire Greenland, calling such threats a violation of international norms. Responding to media inquiries, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning emphasized that state-to-state relations should be handled in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. The US has justified the move on national security grounds and as part of its effort to counter China’s influence in the Arctic, prompting concern among European allies and protests from Greenlanders. China did not directly reference Trump but reaffirmed its stance against coercive diplomacy and emphasized support for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

*Beijing’s restrained but principled response underscores its broader strategy of positioning itself as a defender of multilateralism and international law amid growing US unilateralism and power projection in strategic regions like the Arctic.*

### **Ireland’s Prime Minister pushes for stronger economic ties and EU-China dialogue during China visit**

On 5 January, Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, marking the first official visit by an Irish Taoiseach to China in 14 years. President Xi praised the steady growth of bilateral ties since the establishment of a strategic partnership in 2012, noting that trade had quadrupled and investment remained balanced. Xi further emphasized China's commitment to deepening cooperation in artificial intelligence, digital economy, and healthcare, and called for greater strategic communication with Ireland as a constructive partner within the EU. Martin reaffirmed Ireland's adherence to the one-China policy and stressed the importance of open trade and mutual respect in the global system, expressing interest in expanding collaboration in renewable energy, biotech, and education.

On 6 January, Martin held further talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, where both sides agreed to broaden trade, including in aircraft leasing, services, and life sciences. Martin pressed for the reopening of China's market to Irish beef – suspended since 2024 due to a mad cow disease case – and raised concerns over Chinese tariffs on EU dairy exports. While the Chinese readout omitted direct mention of agriculture, Martin stated that progress was made. The two sides also discussed enhancing cultural and educational exchanges, with Martin attending a signing ceremony between Irish universities and Chinese partners.

*Martin's visit reflects Ireland's intent to deepen bilateral economic ties while also serving as a conduit for stabilizing China-EU relations, especially amid rising trade tensions. Though agriculture remains a sensitive issue, Beijing's focus on strategic sectors suggests future cooperation will likely hinge on tech, green energy, and Ireland's role as an EU access point.*

## **South Korean President visits China to reset ties**

On 5 January, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung held a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, marking the first state visit by a South Korean leader to China since 2019. The two leaders agreed to “open a new phase” in bilateral ties, reaffirming their countries' strategic cooperative partnership and committing to enhanced dialogue, economic cooperation, and regional peace. Xi emphasized mutual respect for core interests and the need for “correct strategic choices” in an increasingly turbulent world, while Lee underscored Seoul's desire to restore full-scale relations.

During the summit, China and South Korea signed 15 cooperation agreements across technology, transport, environment, and trade. Lee also met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on 6 January, where the two leaders discussed expanding collaboration in artificial intelligence, green industries, and market access. With over 200 South Korean business leaders accompanying Lee, including executives from Samsung, Hyundai, and SK Group, the visit placed strong emphasis on economic re-engagement, particularly amid Beijing's efforts to counter strained ties with Japan. Lee also raised the need for constructive dialogue with North Korea, urging China to act as a mediator, citing stalled inter-Korean communications and rising missile threats from Pyongyang.

*Lee's visit reflects Seoul's calibrated effort to rebalance relations with Beijing without alienating Washington, leveraging economic ties and historical common grounds to navigate regional volatility. While China seeks strategic alignment, Seoul is more focused on pragmatic cooperation on trade with China and de-escalation on the Korean peninsula.*