

# Kim's debut visit choice overinterpreted

By Li Kaisheng

Recent reports have showed that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's international debut will likely be in Bandung, Indonesia for the Asian-African Conference in April, before attending the celebrations to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII in Moscow in May. Beyond the media hype, public attention has been focused on why Kim is not visiting China first. Is he deliberately alienating Beijing and trying to lower the influence of China? Will the divergence between the two sides be more undisguised?

Many people believe that the special relationship between China and North Korea is due to the comprehensive effects of geopolitics and history. North Korea may have realized that it is abnormal to highly depend on a single country. However, against the backdrop of its in-

ternal problems and external dilemma, what North Korea needs is not to alienate China, but to develop its relations with other countries based on a solid tie with China.

There is no reason for Kim not to come to China for his first international state visit since taking power three years ago. And China, as a country with a special responsibility to maintain peace and stability in Northeast Asia, has no reason not to play host to Kim.

For those who wonder why Kim has not visited China, a better explanation could be that the two sides have not reached a consensus yet, rather than speculations such as that Kim is purposely bypassing China or that China is intentionally giving him the cold shoulder.

It is widely known that North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests in total, and the latest one was conducted after Kim assumed office. China,

on the other hand, has declared that it firmly opposed Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons. Thus, if Kim does not show good faith over this issue, Beijing obviously has no reason to receive him.

Perhaps, Kim still deems that he could keep North Korea's relationship with China in the traditional pattern, under which Beijing, to avoid losing Pyongyang as a buffer zone, would keep its eyes shut to Pyongyang's behavior that might harm China's interests, and would warmly embrace Kim's visit.

However, China has grown bored with constantly being subject to North Korea's demand. Especially after Xi Jinping took over as Chinese president, its diplomatic priority has become seizing the strategic initiative and not to be easily led by the nose. If Kim wants to keep playing this game, he can only run into opposition.

It doesn't matter to Beijing that Kim does not choose China as his first stop. Kim could have improved relations with China and leveraged his diplomatic weight by visiting China first. Even though he can gather enough media attention by going to Bandung and Moscow, he would not get concrete help from these two host countries.

Russia is in a difficult position at the moment with a collapsing economy and chilly relationship with the US. It can hardly provide any material support or facilitate to resume the Six-Party Talks with conditions required by North Korea.

Some may make a fuss over the rift between China and North Korea. But realistically, everyone knows there are different stances over some critical issues between the two sides. A strong and confident China does not mind showing the world these divergences. On the contrary, Kim might

feel a chilly isolation. A lack of support from China will deal a heavy blow to Pyongyang given its vulnerable position in the international community.

Therefore, for China, it is not important where Kim wants to make his debut. What matters is his intentions over the nuclear issue and his stance on the Sino-North Korean relationship. Beijing needs to take active steps or even impose pressure to nudge Pyongyang toward peace and greater responsibility. If North Korea is willing to work with China, Beijing will welcome Kim whenever he wants to come. Otherwise China will not be prepared to become Kim's host country no matter how many places he visits.

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# India subtly shifts on climate change agreements, but power gap persists

By Dhanasree Jayaram

After the US-China agreement on climate change was signed in late 2014, expectations were high that India would also come on board during US President Barack Obama's recent visit to the country. Although a "concrete" agreement was not reached in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction commitments, a few crucial steps were taken in the direction of securing a stronger agreement at the Paris climate convention later in 2015.

India being the third largest emitter of GHGs is expected to take on the leadership role on the global climate change scene. However, India's per capita emissions stand at a meager 1.7 metric tons (mt), far behind the 17.6 mt of the US and China's 6.2 mt. Even in terms of aggregate emissions, India accounts for only 6.41 percent of the world's total GHG emissions.

More than 300 million people in India are still deprived of electricity. Furthermore, rural households that are inhabited by nearly 70 percent of the Indian population produce only a

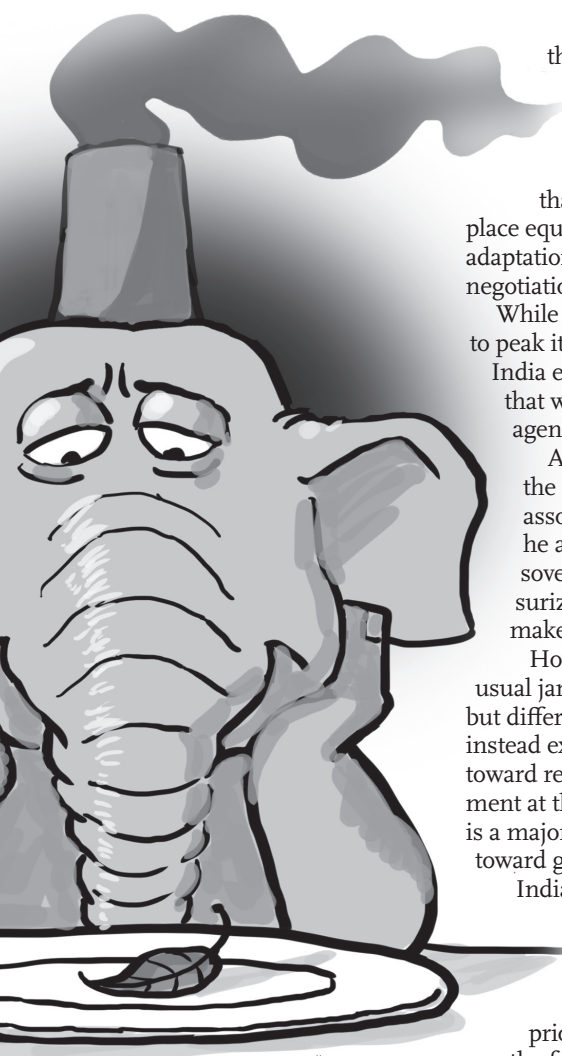


Illustration: Liu Rui/GT

16th of the emissions of the urban households. Such a large divide renders a nation-wide emissions reduction target not only unfeasible but also unfair. Hence, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, despite being the only political leader to have authored a book on climate change save for former US vice president Al Gore, has had to adopt

the middle ground on climate change mitigation.

Modi's statement during the joint press conference with Obama made it clear that India would continue to place equal emphasis on mitigation and adaptation as well climate finance at the negotiations.

While China agreed for the first time to peak its carbon emissions by 2030, India evaded such commitments that would likely affect its growth agenda.

Although Modi underscored the sense of urgency and severity associated with climate change, he also asserted that India, as a sovereign country, cannot be pressurized by any external entity to make commitments.

However, he refrained from the usual jargon such as the "common but differentiated responsibility" and instead expressed willingness to work toward reaching a robust global agreement at the Paris summit. This in itself is a major shift in India's approach toward global climate policy.

India, at this stage, is keeping its options wide open as energy security, self-reliance and poverty alleviation remain its top priorities. This is why, in spite of the fact that clean energy is one of Modi's foremost priorities, the government plans to double the country's coal production to 1 billion tons annually, which cannot be considered a sustainable or environmentally sound option.

At the same time, Modi had earlier declared that India would produce 100 gigawatts of solar power by 2022. Obama not only endorsed India's ambitious solar program but also reaffirmed

his intent to provide financing for the development of solar power projects in India.

India is also looking to expand the share of nuclear power in its energy basket to achieve the twin objectives of improving the energy security scenario as well as reducing GHG emissions as nuclear energy is regarded as a "clean" fuel. This is why the recent nuclear agreements with the US are so important.

Most importantly, India and the US have agreed to phase out hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – a potent GHG that is considered many more times detrimental than carbon dioxide to the climate. For a long time, India opposed any amendment to the Montreal Protocol to include HFCs among the gases that require to be phased out.

India's decision to revive the Indo-US HFC Task Force to discuss alternatives, technology transfer and finance and to cooperate under the auspices of the Montreal Protocol is being viewed as a welcome step.

With China and the US espousing certain commitments and India showing more keenness to attain "an ambitious climate agreement" in Paris in 2015, the three nations are likely to come together further to reach a consensus on the sharing of commitments – whether it is with regard to emissions cuts or the sharing of technological and financial resources.

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