



## Xi's four nation visits produced milestone results

By Zhang Yuwei – June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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The "shirt sleeve summit" outside of Washington between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Barack Obama produced - even if no official agreements - concrete results, many say, and the historic meeting, years from now, will be viewed as a milestone in US-China relations.

Stephen Orlins, a China hand who heads the New York-based National Committee on US-China Relations, said the meeting was "a very big deal", praising the progress that has been made over the past 40 years in this increasingly interdependent relationship.

"Just think of 30 or 40 years ago, it would have been impossible to conceive of this kind of interaction, and here we have it occurring in California," noted Orlins.

The two leaders said they were ready to advance the building of a new model of China-US military-to-military relations, which includes China's navy's participation in a US-led joint Rim of the Pacific Exercise for the first time next summer. The event is seen as a step towards building confidence between the nations' navies at a time when both are boosting their military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Recognizing the impact of the joint effort from the two nations, the leaders also discussed climate change and denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. Neither country, said the leaders, will accept the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a "nuclear-armed state" and will work together to deepen cooperation to achieve its denuclearization.

"It appears that both presidents are prepared to intensify their efforts to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula and make progress on rolling back DPRK's nuclear program," said Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at Washington-based Cato Institute. "Pyongyang may have anticipated this development, given the Kim government's conciliatory gestures over the past week," said Carpenter, referring to the DPRK's envoy Choe Ryong-hae's Beijing visit and meeting with Xi in May.

The two leaders also agreed to advance cooperation on climate change by reducing emissions of hydro-fluorocarbons, a potent greenhouse gas - a move by the world's two biggest emitters that gained applause by environmental experts.

Andrew Steer, president of the World Resources Institute in Washington, calls the agreement a "significant breakthrough".

"Joint action on HFCs can reduce one of the world's most potent greenhouse gases, and it reveals a new level of cooperation between these countries on climate change," said Steer.

Nine days, four countries, from the Caribbean, to Latin America, and to the US, Xi's four-country visits were seen as an effort from the new Chinese leadership - which took over in March - and its desire to build closer ties with these countries.

In Port of Spain, the Chinese president met with seven other leaders from Caribbean countries. Deals penned in Costa Rica and Mexico, including trade and infrastructure, were welcomed by local people.

The world's second-largest economy is now Latin America's second-largest trading partner and major source of investment.

"China is now more important than the US to explain the growth of Latin America," said Osvaldo Rosales, director of the International Trade and Integration Division at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Much of the growth in the region comes from favorable external conditions for their commodities, particularly in South America. And we know that the bulk of that demand is Chinese, so that significant gains in terms of trade that explain the economic growth and employment generation is closely linked to the economic link the region is developing with China," said Rosales.

Eduardo Ulibarri, Costa Rica's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, called the visit a "new momentum" to a young relationship between the two countries, which established diplomatic ties in 2007. He said not only did it enhance economic and political ties, but also people-to-people exchanges. More Costa Rican people are looking into studying Mandarin, said the diplomat.

In 2008, a Confucius Institute was set up at the University of Costa Rica. Latin America now hosts some 20 Institutes that promote Chinese language and culture.