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KOLKATA TO KUNMING: IMPORTANCE OF NORTH EASTERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Sino-India's relation had taken a paradigm shift when both come forward to engage in form of trade and commerce with the India's initiation of 'Look East Policy' and China's shifting of development in priority basis towards the southern and western. In this course the Kolkata to Kunming or K2K initiative take shape as a medium of sub-regional integration. This initiative was conditioned by the regional (eastern India and southern China) importance in their respective policy making and framing. K2K had cross a decade with not much of significant endeavors in the course of Sino-India's relations. Something has been missing out and the resultant is the slow pace in integrating the respective regions and missing part is the North Eastern India in form of bridge. The racial and cultural affinity to China and physical belongingness to India, the North Eastern India do have a role to be played which is not seen by many. The BCIM car rally projected the possibility of connecting the Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar from eastern India to southeastern China via Bangladesh and Myanmar. Thus Kolkata-Imphal-Kunming does make better sense in connection with that of K2K initiative.

KEYWORDS

Sino-India's relation, Kolkata to Kunming and importance of North Eastern India.

INTRODUCTION

Look East Policy' (LEP) was the driving principle of the India's engagement with Southeast Asia and beyond following its 'New Economic Policy' of 1991. The year 2007, mark the realistic approach in India's foreign policy making by initiating 'Look East Policy-North East' (LEP-NE). The opening of North Eastern India (NEI) as a gateway to the world for trade and commerce along with 'people to people contact concept', led India for a major paradigm shift in its policy making and largely widen its security, economic, strategic and political outlook. This shift in the engagement with the other countries had given an essence of the localization of the foreign policy making. Nevertheless practicability of the evolving concept of the localization of the foreign policy seems to be not in channel as citing the India's China engagement.

The BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar), BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), etc. and others multilateral and bilateral engagement had evolved in the wake of Asian rising market, and integration of finance, trade and commerce. Unlike European and American, the Asian racial and ethnic compositions are so diverse that reflects the mosaic culture. This culture is the wheel to the world view of each region and country which manifested at the market and its engagement. Bearing this in mind, we can zeroed the Sino-India's relations will better if some synthesis cultural element is included. NEI stands this synthesis culture and the region can play a role of bludgeon in every aspect of Sino-India's relations. With this understanding, this analysis will narrate the importance of Kolkata to India and Yunnan to China leading to the evolution of K2K in Sino-India's relations. Further, the similarity and shared culture and history of NEI and Yunnan Province of China will be highlighted. The concluding remark of this analysis will be the KIK (Kolkata-Imphal-Kunming) or NEI as a corridor to the India's engagement with China microscopically and East and Southeast Asian in larger context as a pragmatic ingress of integrating the entire 'Asian' region.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study is to find assisting front of K2K which will act as a medium to strengthen Sino-India's relation in form of integrating both for trade and commerce rather than proxy war and unhealthy competition.

HYPOTHESIS

Whether the region which has cultural and racial affinity can play a role in nation to nation engagement or the economic driven principle conditions by global trend of economic integration had made borderland to act as a bridge.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Extensive literature survey, collection of secondary data and historical analysis were used to construct the concept. Since this research is analytical research, data are collected from the website, blogs, journal, books, governmental statement, newspapers, etc.

WHY K2K IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SINO-INDIA'S RELATION

Why K2K in Sino-India's relation is the fundamental question that has pose and nobody tries to either response or ponder over it. This quest is better answer if we thoroughly study the importance of Kunming for China and Kolkata for India. Before bringing forth the importance of the respective regions, what are the factors that compel to take shape the K2K in 2002 rather than in earlier needs to be address? The prime factors are as follows;

Firstly, the collapse of the communist in Eastern Europe along with disintegration of the erstwhile USSR, compel India to go closer to Southeast and East Asia rather than remaining stranded.

Secondly, India's initiation of its 'New Economic Policy' and LEP induced to open a new front of economic engagement.

Thirdly, the concept and content of LEP shifted from trade to economic and security paradigm in engaging with other countries.

Fourthly, the growing Sino-India's engagement in terms of trade and commerce since the beginning of 2000s marking China as the largest trading partners of India.

Fifthly, Chinese concept of developing its economically weak Yunnan Province by linking with its immediate Asian neighbors for its development.

Lastly, China's changing outlook of domestic and foreign policy making in the realm of converting itself as one of the economic master of Asia and the world.

With these factors what needs to observe is the importance of these two regions and that of K2K which are as follows:

IMPORTANCE OF KUNMING FOR CHINA

Yunnan Province is the poorest region in China and its poor economic condition had adversely affected to the fiscal policy of China. It has 25 recognized ethnic groups out of 52 different ethnic groups of China. According to National Bureau of Statistic PRC, the overall population of Yunnan is 46.13 million with highest illiteracy rate of China by 2011. It shared international boundary with Myanmar in west, Laos in south and Vietnam in southeast which gave a comparative advantage for border trade with neighboring countries. Micheal Lubina hold the opinion that, China's Myanmar policy is condition by geopolitical factors from the perspective of securing markets, development of Yunnan and Myanmar domestic stability. The evolving intricacy of the Chinese economy after its economic liberalization and its resultant societal norms obliges the central authority for balance allocation. According to Hongbin Cai and Daniel Treisman, 'Mao period

onward the provincial self-reliance and self-sufficient economy in China was encouraged, which ultimately mean 'multidivisional market'. The changes that has brought by economic liberalization of 1970s had not reached to the Yunnan in favorable manner. It was recently only Beijing had realized the importance of the region and its tap resources. Beijing organized 'China International Travel Mart' for every two year at Kunming to promote tourism for income generation of the region. As the concept of developing the region with the vision of reviving the 'Southern Silk' route and saving China from internal chaos mooted a new phase of China's policy making. Such opening will prevent China from engulfing to other political unrest and insurgency problem minted out from resentment, which already had at Tibet and Xinxiang. The region is well off in rubber plantation, tobacco, mineral base industry, high potential of hydro power generation, etc. With this availability and geographical proximity along with the strategic location of the region do command to be a gateway to the Southeast and South Asia. Thus driven by such enthusiast the 'China South Asia Commodity Fair' was shifted its venue to Kunming from Beijing in 2009. This shows the importance of the Yunnan province in evolving China's engagement with the other nations.

IMPORTANCE OF KOLKATA FOR INDIA

Kolkata had served as one of the strategic transacts point of the South, Southeast and East Asia with the rest of world since British India time. West Bengal is the India's fourth most populous with 7.55% having an area of 88,750 km and shared international boundary with Nepal and Bhutan in south and Bangladesh in the east. It is the home of Bengali, Marwari, Bihari, Oriya, Sherpas, Tibetans, Nepali, Santhal, Kol, Toto, Chinese, Tamils, Gujaratis, Anglo-Indians, Armenian, Punjabis, Parsis, etc. The Chinese inhabitants are mainly concentrated at Chinatown in the Eastern Kolkata which is also only Chinese settlement in India. It is also the headquarters of three Zones of the Indian Railways viz. Eastern, Southern and Northeast Frontier Railway and one of the major sea and river port in eastern India which gives an immense advantage in trade and commerce. It had been the place where all the differences met and diffuse to evolve a unique pattern of medium for engagement. India looks toward Southeast Asian via West Bengal with immense interest particularly with Myanmar where India needs oil. Its engagement with East and Southeast Asia via West Bengal do make a sense and pragmatic approach, sensing its location, ethnic composition, diversity of culture and prolong engagement with the rest of world since British time.

KOLKATA TO KUNMING/K2K

As India and China were on the verge of overtaking the western dominion in every aspect, it is inevitable of both either to merge for mutual benefit or compete for the dominion. Both had bitter experience over the unsettle boundary problem followed by the proxy war. Realizing the drawbacks of such, both despite several differences in certain area comes up with better engagement in trade and commerce. K2K was an idea that had flourished amongst the scholars of India and China by giving its shape as 'Tract II' interaction of India and China in 2002. Chinese government took pro-active step in materializing the sub regional (Yunnan and West Bengal) level interaction as the Yunnan Development Research Centre (YDRC) had served as the nodal organization in facilitating the K2K activities. From Indian side, South Asia Research Society, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), China Centre of University of Calcutta, and Centre for Studies in International Relation and Development (CSIRD) bear the responsibility of materializing the initiation.

The primary objective of the K2K initiative has been concentrated to facilitate mutual interaction of India and China at sub regional level mainly focusing at the economic, cultural and academic interactions. According to CSIRD, the K2K Forum meets every year alternatively in Yunnan and West Bengal, wherein representatives from Chambers of Commerce, departments of tourism, IT, culture, health, tea board and industry, and academics presented making the meets a resourceful one. In the 9th meeting of the BCIM at Kunming in 2010, K2K was presented as a model "Track II" process to be emulated at the (multilateral) BCIM level. The K2K meet of 2011 resulted to the creation of "K2K Business Forum" and "K2K Secretariat". Some of the objectives of the K2K Forum are as follows:

1. It is to facilitate cooperative ties among the commercial associations from both sides;
2. It further commits itself to organizing trade fairs, promote joint ventures, collaboration in R&D and mutual technology transfer;
3. The Business Forum is firmly committed to promote Small and Medium Enterprises and provide them market access in both provinces;
4. Working towards establishment of trade and cultural centres in Kolkata and Kunming.
5. It is further committed to facilitate mutually beneficial commercial, academic and cultural interactions;
6. To promote mutual cultural understanding, the K2K Forum is working towards organizing mutual cultural exhibitions in Kolkata and Kunming;
7. Concluding Memorandum of Understanding between universities and other academic institutes in both the provinces is another objective the K2K Forum is committed to;
8. The Forum also envisages creating K2K Cultural Forum and K2K Educational Forum to give a boost to mutual interactions in these two fields.

As further development of the K2K Forum, it will focus on seven areas:

1. Agriculture and Food Processing
2. Non-Conventional Energy
3. Textile
4. Leather
5. Tea and Jute
6. Travel and Tourism
7. IT.

Understanding the importance of the two region of both and how the K2K had evolved and contributed to the Sino-India's relation, a bird eye views on the Sino-India's relations became inevitable. The following section will dealt with Sino-India's relations into phase wise, so as possibility of an auxiliary front in India's engaging with China can develop.

SINO-INDIA'S RELATION

Sino-India's relation hover around the unsettle boundary, master of Asia and its resultant standstill position. India and China compete for a powerful global player and leader of Asia which resulted to the liability of involvement of both into proxy. The relation between the two better explained into phases wise as follows;

FIRST PHASE 1947-1962: FRIENDSHIP AND WAR

In 1948 India stretch the hand of good neighbor by proclaiming noninterference in China's internal matter and even became the second nation after Myanmar to recognize the Communist China by Non Communist State. In 1958 a big chunk of Northern Assam and NEFA were included in the 'China Pictorial' and in western sector infrastructure development by Chinese were in full swing at the disputed area in which India officially objected to it. Both made accusation of encroachment to its respective boundary wherein Nehru government followed the forward policy and ultimately Sino-India War of 1959-61 broke out. The total Chinese territorial claim reach 33, 000 in western sector, and 90,000 in eastern sector by the end of war, thus Sikkim, Bhutan, North Eastern Frontier Tract, eastern part of Assam, and Ladakh became the bond of contention. In 1962 China unilaterally declares cease fire and 'Sino-India War' ended with the 'Colombo Proposal'. Several Chinese scholars hold the opinion that; China goes for border war with India in 1959 to escape from the border related problem with other neighbors.

SECOND PHASE 1663-1990: ARM RACE, PROXY WAR AND RECONCILIATION

China's nuclear explosion at Lop Nor in 1964 gave an extra boost to the Chinese supremacy. China-Pakistan's relation gain momentum as China gain 2,700 sq. miles (part of Jammu and Kashmir) in wake of containing Indo-USSR relation and India's influence at the Asian regions. Which found manifested in Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 wherein China warn India of dare consequence of its activities across the Sikkim border and the western sector; Soviet intervention stop from further spread of enmity environment. The relation further deteriorated with the India's involvement in Bangladesh war and its nuclear explosion of 1975. Meanwhile, Sikkim was included to the Indian Union in which China term it as an act of aggression. India's becoming a nuclear power state and China's shift of policy towards peace and development helps in defusing the tension between the two. The diplomatic relation was restored from 1976 onward, but again turns

to soar in 1986 when China condemn the establishment of disputed Arunachal Pradesh as state of Indian Union. Rajiv Gandhi visited China in December 1988, resulting to set up a 'Joint Working Group' (JWG) on boundary question and a 'Joint Group' (JG) on Economic Relations, Trade, Science and Technology. This shows the effort that was made by both to normalize the tension despite many odds.

THIRD PHASE 1991-1997: NECESSARY EVIL AND CONTINUING PROXY WAR

In 1991 India's economy was liberalize and initiated its 'LEP', with a foremost task of integrating with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This initiative has seen by the ASEAN countries as a way of balancing China and China perceive this development as India is on the verge of competing and containing its sphere of influence at the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific. In 1993 P.V. Narasimha Rao visited China and signed an agreement on 'Border Peace and Tranquility' and set up 'Sino-India Expert Group of Diplomatic and Military Officers' to assist the work in JWG. This was follow by the JWG meets in New Delhi and exchanges the 'Instruments of Ratification' in respect to Confidence Building Measures Agreement. This demonstrated the eagerness of both to normalize the relation in the realm of mutual growth and prosperity indicating the importance of trade and commerce in diffusing the tension between the two.

FOURTH PHASE 1998-2006: RECONCILIATION WITH MISTRUST AND FEAR PSYCHO

In 1998 George Fernandez reports claim that China was India's potential threat number one which offends the former. The same year India goes for nuclear test at Pokhran and cited the China as a reason in which China strongly condemn it. Jiang Zemin in an interview at Newsweek on 21st June 1998, said, 'I was very surprised that they conducted the nuclear tests. I was even more surprised that they cited China as a reason for their nuclear testing'. After two year, China responded to the India's nuclear explosion by militarization and development of 'Blue Water Navy' along with the condemnation of India's act of treachery by allowing Tibetan to use its soil for anti-China activities. Despite this first 'Bilateral Security Dialogue' between the two was held at Beijing resulting to some positive initiatives. Amidst this development, the residence of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir who are visiting to China were issue staple visa indicating that they are part of China and strengthening its claim over the disputed territory. India established 'Far Eastern Naval Command' as a counter response to the China's presence and increasing influence at Indian Ocean and its neighbor. Further, India built a 165 km long road connecting Manipur with Kalaymew/Kalemu to dilute and temper the Chinese economic dominance at Northern Myanmar and may be used in future for military movement. Nevertheless there is a greater success in economic term through JWG and JSG (Joint Study Group) indicating the possibility of better relation. Driven by the necessity of each other for its fast developing economy, both were on the verge of minimizing the tension as much as possible. The signing of an agreement on 'political parameter and guiding principle for the settlement of Sino-India boundary question' and recognition of Sikkim as a part of India by China shows step forward for reconciliation.

FIFTH PHASE 2007-2013: PARADIGM SHIFT IN HOME AND FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

India's foreign policy making took a major lift by initiating LEP-NE in 2007 which incorporated NEI in India's engagement with other nations. China's opposition and ban on the fund of Asian Development bank US\$ 60 billion for Arunachal Pradesh watershed development in 2009 can be seen as a response to protect its interest. The beginning of 2010 mark with the increases cooperation in the field of business as a 'Business Deal' struck for US \$ 16 billion marking the China as India's largest business partner surpassing US 10 billion business deal. The 'BCIM Car Rally' of 2013 which begin from Kolkata passing through NEI and ending at Kunming had marked new era for Sino-India's relation. This rally has opened a new engagement front between the India and China. Both tries to include it's prolong neglected and most backward regions viz. Yunnan and NEI in its multilateral and bilateral engagement.

After analyzing the Sino-India's relation it is clear that the NEI can play a major role in diluting and tempering the differences. The region location and available man power and natural resources can act as a catalyst of resource hunger India and China for mutual growth rather than compete. As scholars like Jayanta Kumar Ray and Prabir De had identified the advantage of integrating NEI and Southwest China to the evolving economic integration. With this understanding the following section will dealt deeply with the importance of NEI.

IMPORTANCE OF NORTH EASTERN INDIA

The term North Eastern India evolved from the political administrative convenience during the British time to economic basis region of Union of India, then slowly as an ethnic/race base region. Many NEI insurgents (People Liberation Army-Eastern Zone, Naga) had claimed that, China provides logistic and tactical training to them in wake of separation movement from Indian Union. Insurgency in the NEI is minted out from New Delhi perception in regards to the people of region and the region as a geo-strategic importance of mainland India. As Sadar Vallabhbhai Patel sent a letter to Nehru saying, "China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along Himalayas in the north and northeast a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans and Mongoloids the undefined states of the frontier with its affinities to Tibet or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves." Further in 1962 when NEI ask for protection, Nehru replied through All India Radio broadcasting by saying "We lost Bomdila, a small town in Kameng Division.....my heart goes out to the people of Assam" leaving the people to their own fate.

The uniqueness of NEI and its importance for governance as a region was realize by the centre after 24 years and thus established North Eastern Council (NEC) in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the eight states. Further, 'The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd' (NEDFi) was incorporated on August 9, 1995 and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) was set up in September 2001 as to uplift the region respectively. The infrastructure position of the region was on pathetic condition which poses a challenge to reap the market potential and gateway of Southeast and East Asia via NEI. In 2007 October the Ministry of External Affairs took a historical step by announcing the LEP-NE, which literally meant the region to serve as a bridge of South, Southeast and East Asia. This steps can be regarded as a three way benefit, **firstly**, it will serve as a healing to the insurgency affected area by providing a ray of hope; **secondly**, localization of foreign policy making in response to the evolving Asian market integration and **lastly** an additional front of engagement wherein a huge manpower is tap.

The influence of the Chinese culture as a soft power over the world movies news channel and other can be seen very visibly and on the other side the Indian culture and ethos has a wide spread influence at the Southeast Asian countries wherein there is a prolong Chinese presence. The NEI is the region wherein the synthesis of the Aryan, Dravidian and Mongoloid culture took place, it blend and diffused to develop a unique pattern of mosaic culture. This mosaic culture will be another ingress wherein India can utilized in penetrating the Asian market. As matter of fact market behavior is condition by the culture and the culture in return was influence by the market norms. The geographical location, shared customs and mosaic culture of NEI had proven to act as a bridge of India's engagement with the Southeast and East Asia.

KOLKATA IMPHAL KUNMING

It had been more than a decade that K2K had evolve as a tract II model in Sino-India's relation. How far this initiation had able to integrate both and to what extend it had been able to contribute to materialize better engagement between the two. If located from the realistic perspective, the home and foreign policy making of both had shown some commonality. India goes for making NEI a bridge and gateway for its engagement with the neighbors and integration of Asian markets. Similarly, China emphasizes to make Yunnan gateway for engaging with the Southeast Asian Countries with further extension by reviving 'Southern Silk Route'. As already BCIM initiation of land connectivity pointed out Manipur as the gateway for India, the concept of Kolkata-Imphal-Kunming will give better optimal approach in Sino-India's relation.

The air distance between Kolkata to Kunming is 1485.42 km with time consuming of 2.13 hours and if happen to passes through Imphal it is 1509.14 km with a time consuming of 2.25 hours. Hopping system with a stoppage at Manipur on hours and day basis will serve in economic betterment of the state along with a new twist in Sino-India's relation. Tulihal Airport is situated at the heart of Imphal West city which gave an advantage of easy accessed to the international market as well as Ema Keithel (largest women market in Asia). Manipur is home of 'Phumdi' (world only floating island), Sangai, Siroy Lily, bamboo base vegetables and herbal medicinal plants which are well-known and in high demand at Southeast and East Asia. The advantages of accumulating Imphal at the K2K process in the form of Kolkata-Imphal-Kunming are;

1. Manipur tourism will boost if the hopping system of travelling Kolkata to Kunming is introduce;

2. Manipuri youths will employed in certain areas related with this initiation which in turn will give decrease in number of youth indulge and enrolment to the insurgency and its activities;
3. Dependency towards the central government for maintenance will decrease;
4. Opportunity of more FDI flows to the region;
5. Additional assessment to the LEP-NE and its people to people contact concept;
6. Prolix to the pre-conceive notion hover around the security dilemma related with the insurgency and proxy war;
7. It will be an asset to the human resource hunger Yunnan Province, since there has high chance of manpower flow from the NEI;
8. Liability of better understanding of each other since the NEI will act as cathode of reacting Sino-India's relation over the proxy war, Asian supremacy, etc.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the above advantages and the slow pace of integrating the India and China in respect of trade and commerce in the eastern and southwestern corridor that had minted out from the K2K, Kolkata-Imphal-Kunming will act as an igniter. The process of K2K will healthier if NEI had been taken on board, since India and China is much enthusiast in opening the gateway towards the Southeast Asia and far beyond via the respective region, thus KIK do make a sense. To be precise indeed the region which has cultural and racial affinity can play a role in nation to nation engagement serving the border land as a bridge by giving the concrete understanding of localization of foreign policy.

TABLE NO. 1: YUNNAN AND NORTH EASTERN INDIA

Minutiae	Yunnan	North East India
Boundary	Have international Boundary with Laos Myanmar Vietnam	Have international Boundary with China Bangladesh Bhutan Nepal Myanmar
Ethnic Minority	Have maximum ethnic minorities (25 out of 56)	Maximum number of ethnic minorities of India
Area	394,000 km ²	262,230 km ²
Population by 2011	46.3 million	45,587,982
Culture	Mixture of several ethnic groups developing into mosaic culture with slight influence of mainland along with culture of self-identification	Mixture of several ethnic groups developing into mosaic culture with influence of mainland along with culture of self-identification
Religion	Christian, Buddhist, Animism/Traditionalist	Hindu, Islam, Christian, animism/traditionalist, Buddhist
HIV/AIDS	Highest in China	Highest in India
Ethnicity/Race	Mongoloid	Mongoloid, Aryan, Dravidian
Dialect	Tibeto-Burman, Tai, Tai Lu, Tai Nua, Hmong-Mein	Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Austric, Tai
Market Culture	Partially women oriented and minimal role of women	Separation of women market(Manipur) and generally market are run by women folk (entire NEI)
Literacy	Highest Illiterate in China	Literate with considerable pool of English speaking

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