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China-Burma Ties in 1954: The Beginning of the “Pauk Phaw” Era

Fan Hongwei

**Institute of China Studies
University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA**

<http://ics.um.edu.my/>

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Fan Hongwei

Email: fhw@xmu.edu.cn

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Fan Hongwei *

Although Burma was the first non-socialist country to recognize new China, the favorable beginning failed to facilitate development of China-Burma relations in the early period (1949-1953). On the contrary, their relations were “noncommittal and very cold”.¹ Both sides were suspicious and mistrustful to each other. China regarded Burma as an underling of imperialist countries. Burma feared that China would invade it and threaten its national security. The cold condition began to alter when two countries’ Premiers visited each other in 1954. After 1954, Beijing and Rangoon began to contact closely and frequently, and China-Burma relations entered the friendly “Pauk Phaw” (fraternal) era during the Cold War. Some have been written about general China-Burma relations in the Cold War, but little as yet has been done in the detail of their ties, particularly the shift in 1954. This study focuses on the manifestation, the causes and impact of the relations change. The turn of 1954 basically consisted of two dimensions: political and economic relations.

Political Relations in 1954

With the symbol of exchange visit between two Premiers, Chou Enlai and U Nu, in 1954, China-Burma relations began to boom. Regarding the significance of the change in 1954 for two countries’ ties, Burma’s Premier U Nu had some statements: “China-Burma amity had not been established until my good friend, Premier Chou Enlai’s first trip to Rangoon.” “Before Premier Chou Enlai didn’t visit Rangoon, I should admit that there were some gaingivings between two countries’ peoples. In Burma’s side, many had such a feeling of fear whether China would subvert Burma’s government.”² “Since Premier Chou Enlai visited Burma, new changes have occurred to China-Burma relations, and following the ‘Five Principles’, two countries developed amity, economic and cultural contacts.”³ “When China was founded in 1949, our two countries’ relations were not friendly. Because China’s Premier visited Burma and I visited China, understanding between us increased. Basing on the new understanding, we issued statement of supporting the famous ‘Five Principles’. We signed economic and trade agreement, and cultural delegations visited each other.”⁴

In 1954, both sides consulted and exchanged views on the issues disturbing

* Dr Fan Hongwei, Associate Professor, Faculty of International Relations and Research School of Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, China. Email: fhw@xmu.edu.cn

¹“Premier U Nu’s Parliament Speech (abstract)”, *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China*, File No. 105-00814-01 (1) .

²“Premier Chou Enlai Hosted Premier U Nu in Kunming”, *Xinhua Semi-Monthly*, No.9, 1957, p.56.

³“Premier U Nu’s Parliament Speech (abstract)”, *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China*, File No. 105-00814-01 (1) .

⁴ “Abstract of Burmese Statesman U Nu’s Speech(10.a.m., October 13, 1955)”, *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China*, File No. 105-00446-04.

Sino-Burma relations, jointly advocated “Peaceful Coexistence Five Principles”, and took it as the “rudder of China-Burma relations.”⁵ Concerning Chou’s trip to Rangoon and the joint statement, U Nu voiced that “your visit and our joint statement greatly promoted to more understanding of two countries.”⁶ “In the beginning, notwithstanding, we were still suspicious to China’s intention.” However, Premier Chou’s visit and the announcement of “Five Principles” “made the tension assuaged”.⁷ Also, Chou agreed with U Nu. He said “When two neighboring and newly founded countries with different political system begin to contact, it is natural that both fear and misunderstand each other.” “These apprehensions, nevertheless, were gradually allayed” because of two Premiers’ exchange visit and the establishment of “Five Principles”.⁸ The establishment of “Five Principles” as the guide of China-Burma relations, of course, was important symbol and reason of the shifted relations in 1954, but more importantly, two parties communicated how to implement “Five Principles”, and reached a consensus on the issues of common interest.

Firstly, the contact of two countries’ leaders increased understanding and the confidence of developing bilateral relations. Both CCP and Anti Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) came into power for the first time, lacked diplomatic experience, and were prejudiced against each other. Before 1954, CCP thought Burmese leaders as proletariat’s enemy.⁹ Burma feared that Chinese leaders were like Hitler,¹⁰ and was afraid that Chou Enlai was a cocky, irascible, and trickish statesman.¹¹ U Nu ever articulated his psychological change before and after his trip to Beijing in 1954. “When I reached Beijing just now, I had some apprehensions.” However, “our apprehensions disappeared after the visit of eleven days.”¹²

In December, 1954, Mao Tse-tung met U Nu visiting Beijing, and praised his visit to China. Mao expressed that China wanted to establish diplomatic ties with Thailand. Nevertheless, “Thailand said it was afraid that China could invade it, but Burma also feared such invasion. However, Burmese uses the means of developing friendly relations with us, and comes here to find out whether we will invade it. And yet, Thailand even is reluctant to come to China to have a look. If you have suspicion and dissatisfactory, you can speak out.”¹³ During the same meeting, U Nu also admitted that “in the past, we dare not say what we want to say, fear that you mistake us for UK’s and U.S.’s lackey, and our opposition parties in Burma report such condition to you. However, after we meet each other now, discuss issues concerned and understand each other, we won’t fear to speak straightforwardly any longer. This

⁵“Joint Statement of China and Burma’s Premiers”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.7, 1954.

⁶ “Burmese Premier U Nu’s Letter to Premier Chou Enlai on the Distorted Coverage of Burma’s Press on China-Burma Joint Statement”, Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China, File No. 105-00037-01 (1) .

⁷“Premier U Nu’s Speech at the Banquet”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

⁸ “Premier Chou Enlai’s Speech at Farewell Banquet”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

⁹“Burmese People’s Struggle”, *People’s Daily*, May 10, 1948.

¹⁰*Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. VI, Beijing: People’s press, 1999, p.382.

¹¹Yunnan Institute of History Studies, ed., *Compiling Materials of China-Burma Friendly Relations*, 1954, Vol.2, No.2, p.5.

¹² “Premier U Nu’s Speech at farewell Banquet”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

¹³ *Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. VI, Beijing: People’s press, 1999, pp. 377-379.

is the most significant achievement of my trip to China.”¹⁴

Moreover, Chou Enlai's distinct personal charm impressed Burmese who feared China, and increased Burmese leadership's favor to China. For example, after Chou's trip to Rangoon, some Burmese felt that “Premier Chou is young and grace”, respected Burmese traditional custom, and “is adept at diplomacy and a statesman.”¹⁵ “His behavior shows that he is a Premier of not a power but a fraternal country. Premier Chou's attitude removed our wrong guesses in half an hour. Since then, we completely believe: if a Premier treats a small country so modestly and hospitably, the country and people which he governs will be more generous and hospitable.”¹⁶ In regard to the effect of Chou's visit to Burma, U Nu wrote to Chou that “for you individual's aspect, for the whole China's aspect, you have made a wide circle of friends here.”¹⁷

Secondly, Burma made promises on the issues which China worried about, and it allayed Beijing's suspicion. After new China's birth, Beijing led itself into going to Korea War and Indochina War. U.S. and its allies in Asia contained China, so China's peripheral security situation was increasingly worsening then. Burma shared over two thousand kilometers land border with China. Consequently, if Burma joined west camp, China's southwest security would be endangered. The economic agreement signed by Burma and U.S. in 1950 had caused Beijing's worry. During U Nu's first visit to Beijing in 1954, he especially mentioned the issue. “Although Burma has no the ability to interfere in China's internal affairs by itself, it is able to get China into a mess if it allows itself to be as the underling of China's enemies.” “We can provide some vital loci which are used as navy and air force strategic bases to launch attacks on PRC. We can also facilitate Chinese enemy's espionage and subversion in China.”¹⁸ Regarding those possibilities, U Nu gave Beijing his promises that “through fair and foul, we by no means become the underling of any country”; “We do anything to jeopardize peace in no case”; Burma “accepts unilateral aid which leads any party's suspicion of the two countries at no time, and even have never the thoughts of accepting such aid. We won't adopt the demarche causing China's apprehension in terms of other some county's instigating.”¹⁹

Thirdly, China's engagements about what Rangoon feared partly removed the latter's suspicion. Before Chou Enlai visited Burma, Rangoon feared and worried about that Beijing exported revolution and subverted its regime largely because of CCP's attitude to BCP and Burma's civil war. During Liu Shaoqi visited Soviet Union in August, 1949, he reported to Stalin that in east Asian countries like Vietnam, Malaya and Burma, “proletariat has no right to pursue revolution, and the means of revolution struggle have been or will be armed guerrilla warfare.”²⁰ At the Labor

¹⁴ *Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. VI, Beijing: People's press, 1999, p.379.

¹⁵ “Burmese Officials and Press's Response to Chou Enlai's Trip to Burma”, *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, File No. 105-00259-03 (1) .

¹⁶ “Premier U Nu's Speech at the Banquet”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

¹⁷ “Burmese Premier U Nu's Letter to Premier Chou Enlai on the Distorted Coverage of Burma's Press on China-Burma Joint Statement”, *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, File No. 105-00037-01 (1) .

¹⁸ “Premier U Nu's Speech at Farewell Banquet”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

¹⁹ “Premier U Nu's Speech at Farewell Banquet”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

²⁰ *Works of Liu Shaoqi since the Establishment of PRC*, Vol.1, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 2005, pp.50-51.

Union Conference in Asian and Australian Countries in November, 1949, Liu asserted that “we should give all kinds of moral and physical aids to proletariat and labor needing help in the countries reigned by capitalism and imperialism”, and shoulder international responsibility to aid all capitalism countries, particularly Asian countries.²¹ In 1950, Liu stated in a CCP’s document that “it’s CCP and Chinese people’s duty-bound international responsibility, and one of the most important means strengthening China’s revolutionary victory in the international circumstance to use all possible measures to aid Communist Party and people in oppressed Asian nations, and struggle for their liberations.”²²

In 1954, Chou Enlai claimed in Rangoon that according to CCP’s idea, “revolution can not be exported. If so, there is no chance of success. Communist Parties of various countries win out only by themselves.”²³ Chou’s Rangoon speech on Communist Party’s “Export of Revolution” had special signification for Burmese. Chou’s visit to Rangoon in June, 1954, did have positive impact on Burma’s policy toward China according to U Nu’s address in Beijing on December 2 in the same year. Furthermore, the joint statement issued by two countries’ Premiers during Chou visited Burma ad hoc stressed that “two Premiers restate: every country’s people have the right of choosing state system and lifestyle, and other countries should not interfere in the choice. Revolution fails to be exported. At the same time, the common volition of the people in one country should not suffer foreign interference.”²⁴

With regard to Burma’s turbulent situation after independence, various insurrections and the possibility of external interference, Mao Tse-tung told U Nu in Beijing in December that “we wish the peace in Burma. Concerning how you acquire the peace, it needs yourself to deal with it...Each country solve its problem by itself.” “Each country has several kinds of parties. With respect to these parties, we can’t allege to oppose or support some party. The counterpart which we negotiate with must be each country’s government. We won’t invade Burma as U.S. interfered in Guatemalan revolution. We won’t move forces to fight into Burma, and the ambassador, Yao Zhongming, meanwhile, acts as the undercover in Burma. Yao will do it in no case. If he does it, we will immediately dismiss him from his post by all means.”²⁵

In the Cold War, the populous Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia ever were looked upon as the “Fifth Column”. Although the population of Overseas Chinese in Burma was not large, Rangoon still worried about the issue of Chinese there. Burmese fear focused on political role and “dual nationality” of Overseas Chinese. Therefore, Mao pledged that “we don’t establish Communist Party in Overseas Chinese community, and its branches have been dismissed. We have done so in Indonesia and Singapore. We enjoined Overseas Chinese not to join in political activities in Burma. They only can participate in some activities permitted by Burma’s government, such as celebration.” “There are some radicals in Burma Overseas Chinese community, and

²¹ *Works of Liu Shaoqi since the Establishment of PRC*, Vol.1, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 2005, p.177.

²² *Chronicle of Liu Shaoqi: 1898 -1969*, Vol.2, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 1996, p.245.

²³ *Chronicle of Zhou Enlai: 1949-1976*, Vol. 1, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 1997, p.393.

²⁴ “Joint Statement of China and Burma’s Premiers”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.7, 1954.

²⁵ *Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. VI, Beijing: People’s press, 1999, pp.374-376.

we persuade them from interfering in Burma's internal affairs. We instruct them to abide by Burma's law, and don't contact with Burmese opposition parties fighting with Burma's government."²⁶

Mao's promise on Overseas Chinese issues was affirmed by the China-Burma communiqué in December, 1954. It stated that Overseas Chinese should "respect law and social custom in Burma, and can't participate in local political activities." "Concerning the issue of colony's nationality, two countries' governments will negotiate it through normal diplomatic channel as soon as possible."²⁷

When U Nu visited China, two Premiers, after consulting, thought it's necessary to establish consulate general each other in two right cities. In fact, this suggestion was also a step of assuaging Burmese apprehension on China. In this regard, Mao explained that "in the past, Burma thought Yunnan dark, and didn't know how many troops Beijing stationed there, what's Chinese trick aiming at Burma. Burma fears us very much. So we suggested Burma establish a consulate general in Yunnan to watch us."²⁸

Economic Relations in 1954

Like Sino-Burma political relations, the economic ties also shifted in 1954. On April 22, 1954, China and Burma signed the first economic trade agreement (valid for three years). According to the agreement, China exported coal, silk, silk fabrics, cotton fabrics, paper, agricultural implements, light industry product, handicraft, porcelain enamel, porcelain, can food, tea, and cigarette to Burma. Burma exported rice, rice product, pulse seedcake, mineral, timber, rubber and cotton to China.²⁹ On November 3, 1954, both signed goods exchange protocol of Burmese rice and Chinese commodities, and the contract that China bought 150,000 long tons Burmese rice.

Also, U Nu's first trip to Beijing promoted bilateral economic relations. After negotiation, "both Premiers think that it's necessary to open China-Burma airline, resume road traffic, and conclude post agreement. In order to develop the trade between two countries, two Premiers agree that China will annually import 150,000-200,000 long tons rice from Burma from 1955 to 1957; during the same period, Burma will import industry equipment and daily necessities from China."³⁰

Although the amount, value and category involved in the 1954 trade agreement and contract cut no figure in two countries' foreign trade, it symbolized that both sides changed the policy of wait and see in the early period. The 1954 shift of China-Burma economic nexus was further materialized in the subsequent years soon. The trade value between two countries in 1955 increased by 30 times than one in 1954, and the number of 1956 rose 44%.

The 1954 change of China-Burma economic ties was attributable to not only the promotion of political relations shift but also the trade as the lever for political

²⁶ *Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. VI, Beijing: People's press, 1999, pp.376-377.

²⁷ "Joint Communiqué of China and Burma's Premiers", *People's Daily*, December 13, 1954.

²⁸ "Account of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's Talk with Visiting Burmese vice Premiers, U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein", *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, No. 105-00339-01(1).

²⁹ "China and Burma Sign Trade Agreement Valid for Three Years", *People's Daily*, April 23, 1954.

³⁰ "Joint Communiqué of China and Burma's Premiers", *People's Daily*, December 13, 1954.

relations. China mainly imported rice, cotton, rubber, and other raw materials from Burma, and exported cotton product, daily commodities, machine and equipment. Then the level of two countries' economy and industrialization were backward but China still had some comparative advantages over Burma. Consequently, in the China-Burma bilateral trade, "the need of Burma's production and life can easily be met by our country's export while its export commodities were inconsistent with the need of China's import."³¹

In October, 1954, when Chou Enlai met Burma's foreign trade delegation in Beijing, he engaged that "henceforth we prepare to meet the Burma's import need, and hope that Burma can list the needed goods." "In the following two years, if China-Burma trade can't balance, we are willing to encash the trade with special funds. The method is special in our foreign trade because we ordinarily swap."³² Chou's promise clearly showed that China was taking advantage of trade to promote political relations. The case in point was the rice trade between two countries.

Rice was vital to Burma's economy. However, "rice is also one of China's staple export goods, impossible to buy a great deal of Burma's rice with foreign exchange. Only when Burma imminently asks us to buy its rice, we can consider buying some rice in order to indicate favor and help Burma out of difficulty."³³ China Vice-Minister of Foreign Ministry, Zhang Wentian, also stressed the significance of promoting economic relations with Asian countries at the session of China's ambassadors in Asia in 1956. "Because we are a power, we don't need some goods such as Burma's rice at times, but we still buy a bit."³⁴

In December, 1954, the memorandum which U Nu gave to China's counterpart mentioned that "the contract of ordering 200,000 tons 1953 Burma's rice was signed by two countries' government on November 3, 1954. About the rice produced in 1953, we are also not sure whether it is edible. So China need dispatch investigators to Rangoon to 'very carefully inspect' it."³⁵ This indicated both sides had not specific stipulation on the ordered rice, and Beijing's intention of promoting bilateral ties through rice trade was self-evident.

Beijing's goodwill in the rice trade indeed gained Rangoon's applause, and Premier U Nu publicly praised it many times. On December 2, 1954, U Nu stated in Beijing that "there is a great deal of overplus rice. Without buyer, we will be caught in dilemma. Meanwhile, due to war destruction, my country's economy is backward. If the rice can't be sold, it will undermine Burma's economic base." Concerning China's purchase of Burmese rice, "we think the generous action is a friendly illustration."³⁶

In the same year, U Nu remarked at the ceremony of Burma's National Day that

³¹"Summary on Ten-year Sino-Burma Economic and Trade Ties by China's Embassy in Burma", *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, File No. 105-00603-01.

³²"A Talk Account of Premier Chou Enlai meeting Burma's Delegation", *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, File No. 105-00130-01 (1) .

³³ "Summary on Ten years Sino-Burma Economic and Trade Ties by China's Embassy in Burma", *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, File No. 105-00603-01.

³⁴*Chronicle of Zhang Wentian: 1942-1976*, vol.2, Beijing: CCP History Press, 2000, p.1021.

³⁵"Burmese Premier U Nu's Letter to Premier Chou Enlai about China-Burma Rice Trade", *Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, File No. 105-00036-01 (1) .

³⁶Yunnan Institute of History Studies, ed., *Compiling Materials of China-Burma Friendly Relations*, 1954, Vol.2, No.2, p.7.

China bought Burma's rice in order to help Burma. "Actually, new China has surplus rice to export, but considering Burma's rice market, China took the exciting steps. And, the profit that Burma got from China exceeded Rangoon's original hope."³⁷

The Cause of China-Burma Relations Shift

The shift of China-Burma relations in 1954 was mostly because China changed its foreign policy, particularly the policy toward Burma while Rangoon actively responded to Beijing's change.

International situational factors. In the early 1950s, establishing military bases, increasing U.S. troops number in the countries around China, U.S. signed a series of military treaties with China's neighboring countries, and formed a military encirclement against China. For example, Thailand-U.S. Military Assistance Agreement(October 17, 1950), Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defence Treaty (August 30, 1951), Korea-U.S. Mutual Defence Treaty (October 1, 1953), U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty (December 2, 1954), U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (March 8, 1954), and Manila Pact (September 8, 1954). Chou Enlai delivered the "Report on the Work of the Government at the First Session of the First National People's Congress" on September 23, 1954, which stated that "in order to build a prosperous socialist industrialized country, we need a peaceful environment and world. Therefore, we should strengthen and develop unity and collaboration with Soviet Union as well as other socialist countries, attach importance to the peaceful collaboration, the promotion of economic and cultural ties with all countries, particularly Southeast Asian and other neighboring countries."³⁸ Therefore, Beijing made efforts to break out of U.S. encirclement, sought the support from Asian and African countries, particularly its periphery. These efforts became main mission of China's diplomacy after Korean War ceasefire. "To this end Chou encouraged the formation and enlargement of the 'area of peace', composed of such countries as Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, and Nepal. In contrast to the initial negative communist attitude towards the 'neutral forces', Chou stressed the importance of the 'uncommitted countries' and devoted much attention to their growing role in fortifying 'the international forces of peace.'"³⁹

China's policy toward Burma. Beijing pursued the foreign policy of "leaning to one side" and insisted that the world was divided into two antagonistic camps and neutralism impossibly existed between them when CCP seized power in 1949.⁴⁰ All non-socialist nations were classified as "stooges" or "running dogs" of imperialism. However, both domestic need and the international environment in early 1950s impelled Beijing to alter its black and white-with us or against us-conception on the world politics, and to begin to stress national interests in its foreign policy-making.

³⁷“Premier U Nu's Report at the National Day Meeting”, (Rangoon) *China's Daily*, November 22, 1954.

³⁸ Song Enfan & Li Jiasong, ed., *The Chronology of PRC's Foreign Affairs*, Vol. I, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1997, p.159.

³⁹ Kuo-kang Shao, "Chou Enlai's Diplomatic Approach to Non-Aligned States in Asia: 1953-60", *The China Quarterly*, No. 78, Jun., 1979, p.326.

⁴⁰ Liu Shaoqi, *Internationalism and Nationalism*, Beijing: People's Press, 1951, p.25.

“In the development of foreign relations Chinese policy shifted gradually away from attempting to drive Western influence out of Asia by direct confrontation or unequivocal support for revolutionary wars, and toward efforts to win Asian neighbors away from alliances with the West through offers of peaceful coexistence.”⁴¹

In 1952, Chou Enlai spelled out that with respect to neutral countries, “we can’t be hostile to them and push them to enemy’s camp. We can make friends with them.” As far as the nationalist countries in Southeast Asia which established diplomatic relations with Beijing were concerned, “we will try for their neutral stance at war, and making them keep imperialism at arm’s length at peace.”⁴²

In 1954, China’s new foreign policy formed, which focused on breaking through U.S.’s containment and encirclement, uniting all countries which wished to maintain peace with China, and create a peaceful, stable regional environment for its domestic economic development and recovery. The new policy was characterized by building “collective peace and security” and expanding “peaceful area” in order to form a safe buffer zone between China and western camp. “This new course in Peking’s foreign policy was apparently directed by three major considerations: first, the enhancement of China’s national security, second, the need for diplomatic flexibility, and third, Peking’s quest for major power status.”⁴³ “To achieve this end Peking would respect the concept of non-alignment as a legitimate approach to Cold War issues.”⁴⁴

On July 8, 1954, Mao Tse-tung gave 11 instructions on China’s diplomacy which included: “begin to establish Southeast Asian peace zone, effect and develop cooperation on the zone, and sign non-aggression pact or collective peace treaty”; “unite all peaceful forces (including government), isolate and split up U.S.”; “International Peace and United Front”, etc.⁴⁵

In August, 1954, Chou Enlai spoke at the 33rd session of central government that it’s necessary to insist on and carry out “Peaceful Coexistence Five Principles”. “We believe...to establish more and broader peace zone in Asia so that these areas won’t become the hothouse where U.S. invader group wage war and organize military group. This central government will strive for Asia collective peace in the light of this guideline.”⁴⁶

The shift of China-Burma relations in 1954 was one of the results of the changed China’s foreign policy, a logical approach of seeking peripheral environment featuring peace and security for Beijing. On December 2, 1954, Chou Enlai claimed that together with Burma, China “will struggle to implement ‘Peaceful Coexistence Five Principles’, establish and expand peaceful zone, and maintain Asia and World

⁴¹Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1970, p.12.

⁴²*Selected Diplomatic Writings of Chou Enlai*, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 1990, pp.52-54.

⁴³Kuo-kong Show, *Communist China’s Foreign Policy toward the Non-aligned States with Special Reference to India and Burma, 1949-1962*, University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. dissertation, 1972, p. 37.

⁴⁴Kuo-kang Shao, “Chou Enlai’s Diplomatic Approach to Non-Aligned States in Asia: 1953-60”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 78, Jun., 1979, p.324.

⁴⁵*Biography: Mao Tse-Tung 1949-1976*, Vol.1, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 2003, pp. 562-563.

⁴⁶“Chou Enlai’s Report on Diplomacy at the 33rd Session of Central People’s Government Committee (August 11, 1954)”, File No.206-Y0037, in PRC Foreign Ministry Bureau of Archives, ed., *Selected Diplomatic Documents of PRC: The Geneva Conference in 1954*, Vol.1, Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 2006, p.495.

peace.”⁴⁷ In addition, the communiqué released during U Nu visited Beijing in 1954 referred that “two countries’ Premiers expressed deep concern over strengthening and expanding peaceful area.”⁴⁸

On China’s part, the change of Sino-Burma relations resulted from Beijing’s new foreign policy. However, Chinese appeal for “Asia Peace Zone” also could not go without Rangoon’s interaction and support.

Burma’s policy toward China. After independence, Burma formulated neutralism and non-alignment foreign policy. It was between 1948 and 1954 that Rangoon established its foreign policy. Burma didn’t have a clear policy on non-alignment in the early years after independence, and was simply groping in the dark.⁴⁹ During Rangoon framed neutralism policy, at least the followed factors strengthen its determination and promoted the formation of the policy. At the end of 1950, The People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet and Korean War. Chinese violence action made Burmese see new China’s strike force and fatality. In particular, “the experience of Korea convinced them that they would have to avoid at almost any cost the possibility of becoming a battlefield for the Western Nations-Communist conflict.”⁵⁰ On March 8, 1951, Burma’s Premier reaffirmed his government’s determination to adhere to its policy of neutrality. By the beginning of 1951, both Burma and India had definitely perceived the necessity of a friendship with China, which had cast her shadow over Asia.⁵¹ Consequently, U Nu explained that the reason of performing neutralism foreign policy by his government was because Burma located in the sphere of influence of two rival camps; Burma’s military and economic powers were weak; it defended itself.⁵² Among these reasons, China was a major contributing factor. “Burma’s non-alignment is primarily to assure China of non-aggression from Burmese soil and to avoid destruction of Burma in another war.”⁵³ “Fear of antagonizing China has also been at least partially responsible for Burma's policy of neutralism.”⁵⁴

After Kuomintang (KMT) troops who had been defeated and driven from the mainland fled to Burma, Rangoon attempted to solve the problem through UN channel. Nevertheless, because of powers’ support, KMT issue was not only effectively solved but more serious. By 1953, KMT troops in Burma had become more powerful with the support of Taiwan and U.S., and its threat to Burma’s national security was more dangerous and bigger. The Burmese feared that Beijing might use the presence of the KMT forces as an excuse to invade Burma. In 1952, PLA crossed

⁴⁷ “Premier Chou Enlai’s Speech at the Banquet Hosting Premier U Nu”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

⁴⁸ “Communiqué of China and Burma’s Premier”, *Xinhua Monthly*, No.1, 1955.

⁴⁹ B. Pakem, *India Burma Relations*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1992, p.29.

⁵⁰ M. D. Stephens, Ma, Frgs, “The Sino-Burmese Border Agreement”, *Asian Review*, Vol. LIX, No.217, 78th Year, January 1963, p.49.

⁵¹ Uma Shankar Singh, *Burma and India, 1949-1962: A Study in the Foreign Policies of Burma and India and Burma’s Policy towards India*, New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1979, p.164.

⁵² U Nu, “Burma’s Neutral Policy”, *Burma*, January 1955, Vol.V No.2, p1.

⁵³ David Wen-wei Chang, *A comparative study of Neutralism of India, Burma and Indonesia*, University of Illinois, Ph.D., dissertation, 1960, p.122.

⁵⁴ John Seabury Thomson, “Burma: A Neutral in China’s Shadow”, *Review of Politics*, 19, 1957, p.336. For other similar arguments, see Jerry Rose, “Burma and the Balance of Neutralism”, *The Reporter*, XXVIII, No. 1, January 3, 1963, p.24; William C. Johnstone, *Burma’s Foreign Policy: A Study in Neutralism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.p. 164; Frank Trager, “Burma and China”, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol.5, No.1, March 1964, p.61.

the disputed border, “1941 Line”, into Burma to annihilate KMT forces. Hence, Burmese had good reasons to worry.

“The result of this experience in the United Nations was to make most Burman leaders feel that their original hopes that membership in the United Nations offered a small nation like theirs protection against outside interference were changed...It was also quite apparent after Burma’s disillusionment with the United Nations, as a protector of the security of small states as shown in the case of handling of the KMT issue by this body, that the Burmese government began to move towards closer friendly relations with Communist China.”⁵⁵ At the same time, Beijing also soothed Rangoon’s anxieties. China offered assurances that so long as adequate steps were being taken against the KMT troops, the issue would not be a cause of trouble between two nations.⁵⁶ China’s forbearance on the KMT issue in Burma created a favourable impression in Rangoon, and made Burmese see the possibility and hope of keeping peace and friendly relations with its northern neighbor. “China’s attitude on the matter was one designed to indicate that it only harbored peaceful intentions and friendly feelings toward Burma and this undoubtedly had the effect of making the Burmese government more receptive to the ‘peace offensive’ that was launched in 1954.”⁵⁷

Furthermore, India and Burma established cordial relations, and two countries’ leadership often consulted about world affairs. New Delhi shaped non-alignment foreign policy and took friendly attitude to Beijing then. These had unneglectable impact on Burmese policymaking of diplomacy. Also, the communists and the socialist elements within Burma forced the U Nu government to appear non-aligned.

Therefore, between 1951 and 1953, Rangoon gradually transmitted more and more goodwill to Beijing, such as the vote about China in UN during the Korean War, approving private shipments of rubber to China, supporting new China’s seat in UN.⁵⁸ “On the part of Burma to please Communist China had become quite unmistakable by the middle of 1953.”⁵⁹

During the Korea War, Rangoon’s and Delhi’s attitudes toward Beijing’s action in Korea also pushed China to reorient its policy to win the nationalist government to the side of socialist camp and utilized their neutrality in world politics. Rangoon and Delhi refused to join in branding China as an aggressor in Korea in January, 1951. In the same year, Burma, India and some other Asian-African countries abstained on the UN strategic war materials embargo against China resolution. Additionally, Burma’s private company exported some rubber to China although its volume was modest during Korea War.⁶⁰ Nationalist countries such as Burma and India adopted different policy toward China from western countries. This caused Beijing to reevaluated

⁵⁵ Uma Shankar Singh, *Burma and India, 1949-1962: A Study in the Foreign Policies of Burma and India and Burma’s Policy towards India*, New Delhi: Bombay, Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1979, pp.171-172.

⁵⁶ K. M. Panikkar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955, p.169.

⁵⁷ Robert Alexander. Holmes, *Chinese Foreign Policy Toward Burma and Cambodia: A Comparative Analysis*, Columbia University Ph.D. dissertation, 1969, pp.15-16.

⁵⁸ During this period, about the detail of how Rangoon pleased Beijing see Shen-Yu Dai, “Peking and Rangoon”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 5, January-March, 1961, p.135.

⁵⁹ Shen-Yu Dai, “Peking and Rangoon”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 5, January-March, 1961, pp.134-135.

⁶⁰ Xu Simin, *An Overseas Chinese Experience: Xu Simin Memoir*, Hong Kong: The Mirror Post Cultural Enterprises Co. Ltd, 1981, pp.100-102.

neutral countries in world politics and placed them into the united front list.

In addition, the influence of the change of Soviet Union's foreign policy shouldn't be ignored. While China gradually adjusted its policy toward neutral countries, Soviet Union's position on those countries further drove the change of Beijing's policy toward Burma. After Stalin's death on March, 1953, Moscow began to seek detente with western camp and think much of its relations with Asian neutral countries. Russian leaders emphasized "peaceful coexistence" and peaceful competition between communist and non-communist countries.

When CCP partly gave up previous principle with ideology as exclusive guide line of foreign affairs, changed viewpoints on neutral countries, and sought to establish and expand peaceful zone in Asia, Beijing's policy shift cause Burma which attempted to keep friendly relations with China resonate. Both found common interest soon.

Conclusion

With the end of Korea War, both domestic pressing needs for peaceful environment necessary to recover and develop economy and increasing pressure of U.S. containment policy against China had much to do with Beijing's pursuit of new foreign policy, "Peace and United Front" focusing on national interest, ending the policy of "putting the house in order before inviting guests" from 1954. 1954 saw the shift of China-Burma relations. However, Burma's fear and distrust on China reflected in the early period after the establishment of diplomatic relations didn't disappear and continued throughout the Cold War, whose degree varied over time.

Although China changed its attitudes toward neutral countries and adopted "peaceful coexistence" policy, the cause behind its change, dual track diplomacy of party to party and government to government foreshowed that the "Pauk Phaw" relation was short-lived.

Behind the change of China's foreign policy in 1954, Beijing hoped to corrode the U.S.-supported anti-Communist alignment by fostering Asian solidarity and neutralism, which had slowly developed in reaction to its own "hard" policies. "It hoped to offset the pull of SEATO which was under active consideration at that time. Its new line sought, in short, to mobilize Asian sympathies against Western supported military alliances and bases and to divide Asians from the West, as well as to create a benign image of Communist China and reduce fear of the Communists. Above all, Peking hoped throughout Asia to create sympathetic attitudes toward Peking and the entire Communist bloc."⁶¹ Therefore, for Beijing, the "peaceful coexistence" line was simply a maneuver, and didn't mean China abandoned its long-run aim of world revolution. Chinese hoped to attain multiple aims through the maneuver: unite neutralist countries and alleviate their suspicions to new China; alienate western camp; expand foreign trade.⁶²

⁶¹ A. Doak Barnett, *Communist China and Asia: A Challenge to American Policy*, New York: Random House, Inc., 1960, pp.101-102.

⁶² Liu Zhiyong, *Chinese National Identity and the Choice of Diplomatic Strategies*, China Foreign Affairs University, Ph.D. dissertation, 2005, p.62.

On November, 1957, Mao articulated at the meeting of Standing Committee of CCP Central Political Bureau that “now, the international community generally recognizes the ‘Peaceful Coexistence Five Principles’ but whether the principles can be adhered to is another problem. Firstly, U.S. fails to do it, and whether Nehru can completely stick to it still needs to be observed. We have abided by the principle. In terms of the foreign policy and the relations between different countries, it’s true that they should be based on the principles. In respect of international communism movement, the general line of foreign relations of one communist party, nevertheless, can’t be restricted in scope to “peaceful coexistence” principles. Because communist countries need supporting and helping each other; communist parties in power need supporting world revolution and the other nonofficeholding communist parties in capitalist countries; independent movements in colony and semi-colony, and international labour movement need supporting. In conclusion, we should fulfill the obligation of proletarian internationalism. Therefore, ‘peaceful coexistence’ can’t become the general line of one communist party.”⁶³

Mao’s speech reflected China’s foreign policy within a conceptual framework of contradiction: sticking to “peaceful coexistence” on the one hand and opposing imperialism and supporting world revolution on the other hand. The duality of China’s foreign relations was characterized by party to party relations and state to state relations. Consequently, the earlier “peaceful coexistence” emphasis would be replaced by the ideal of national revolution, a more militantly anti-imperialist policy when Chinese leadership judged that suitable opportunity for revolution arose. China’s contradictory foreign policy doomed the rift between Beijing and Rangoon in 1967.

⁶³Wu Lengxi, *A Debate for Ten Years: Memoirs on Sino-Soviet Union Relations 1956-1966*, Beijing: Central Compilation Press, 1999, p.152.

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