

STUDY ON CHINA-MYANMAR RELATIONS AFTER THE
MYANMAR'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION



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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
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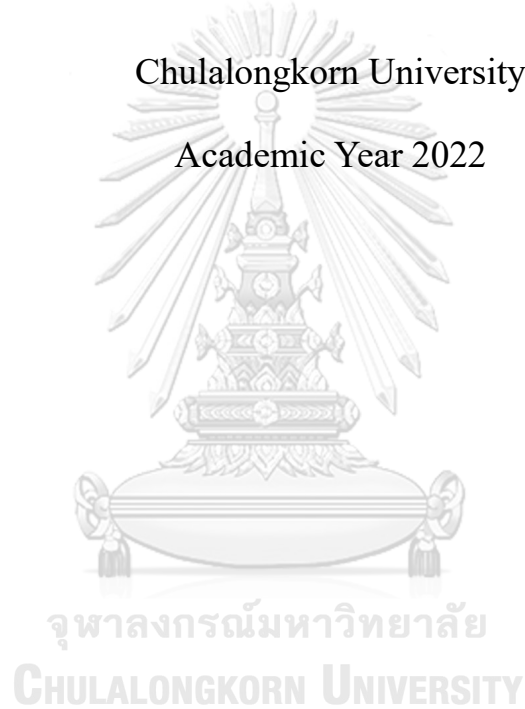
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ยงคิง กัว : การศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างจีนและพม่าหลังจากการเปลี่ยนแปลงประชาธิปไตยของพม่า.

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เนตร ชุตินทรานนท์

พม่ามีสถานที่ทางภูมิศาสตร์พิเศษเชื่อมต่อเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ และเอเชียใต้ตั้งอยู่ ที่ตั้งแยกของจีนอินเดีย และอาเซียนหันหน้าไปทางทะเล อันค้ำประกันทางตะวันตก และทะเลจีนใต้ในมหาสมุทรแปซิฟิก ซึ่งมีความสำคัญทางยุทธศาสตร์ทางยุทธศาสตร์อย่างสำคัญสำหรับจีนพม่าเป็นส่วนสำคัญของการทูตในละแวกบ้าน และเป็นประเทศ ที่สำคัญตามโครงการหนึ่งแถบหนึ่งเส้นทางดังนั้น ในบริบทของการปฏิรูป "ประชาธิปไตย" ของพม่าเป็นสิ่งสำคัญอย่างยิ่งในการวิเคราะห์นโยบายของพม่า ที่มีต่อจีน และการทดสอบการเปลี่ยนแปลง และการไม่เปลี่ยนแปลงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง จีน และพม่า.

ตั้งแต่การจัดตั้งความสัมพันธ์ทางการทูตความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง จีน และพม่ามีความสุขกับการพัฒนา ที่เป็นมิตรและความร่วมมือแบบทวิภาคี และการแลกเปลี่ยนได้รับการเพิ่มขึ้นหลังจากรัฐบาลใหม่เข้าสู่อำนาจในปี 1988 จีน และพม่าได้ก่อตั้งความสัมพันธ์ทางการทูต ที่ค่อนข้างมั่นคง และใกล้ชิด และทั้งสองฝ่ายประสบความสำเร็จในการพัฒนาทางการเมือง เศรษฐกิจทหารวัฒนธรรม และอื่น ๆ ในปี 2011 รัฐบาล Thein Sein ได้มีอำนาจ และพม่าได้ตระหนักถึงขั้นตอนสุดท้ายของแผน ที่เจ็ดขั้นตอนสู่ประชาธิปไตยการเปิดประตูของการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางการเมืองแบบประชาธิปไตยอย่างไรก็ตาม ตั้งแต่การปฏิรูปประชาธิปไตยของพม่าในปีค.ศ. 2011 การเปลี่ยนแปลง ที่ยิ่งใหญ่ได้เกิดขึ้นในการเมือง และเศรษฐกิจภายในประเทศ ซึ่งส่งผลกระทบต่อความสัมพันธ์ ที่เป็นมิตรระหว่าง จีน และพม่า และนำไปสู่ข้อพิพาทหลายครั้งนโยบายระ

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Myanmar has a special geographical location, connecting East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. It is located at the intersection of China, India and ASEAN, facing the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) in the west and the South China Sea (Pacific Ocean) in the east, which has significant geostrategic significance. For China, Myanmar is an vital part of its neighborhood diplomacy and an essential country along the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, in the context of Myanmar's "democratic" reform, it is of great significance to analyze Myanmar's policy towards China and the test of changes and unchanging relations between China and Myanmar.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China-Myanmar relations have enjoyed friendly development and bilateral cooperation and exchanges have been heating up. After the new military government came into power in 1988, China and Myanmar established relatively stable and close diplomatic relations, and both sides achieved further development in the political, economic, military, cultural and other fields. In 2011, the Thein Sein government came to power, and Myanmar realized the last step of the seven-step roadmap to democracy, opening the door of democratic political transformation. However, since Myanmar's democratic reform in 2011, great changes have taken place in its domestic politics and economy, which has affected the originally friendly relations between China and Myanmar and led to a series of disputes. Myanmar's international policy presents a totally different feature from the past, the most notable one is that Myanmar has made great progress in its relations with Western countries, while the relations between China and Myanmar have been loosened. In 2021, another military coup broke out in Myanmar, which severely damaged Myanmar's democratic reform. Myanmar's internal stability will have a direct impact on the security of China's border areas and the smooth progress

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1.1 Research Background and Significance

(1) Research Background

China and Myanmar have maintained friendly national feelings since the establishment of diplomatic ties. During the period when Myanmar was subjected to sanctions and isolation by Western countries, China actively supported and assisted Myanmar without interfering in its internal affairs. The two countries conducted in-depth exchanges and cooperation in many fields, which laid a solid foundation for the in-depth development of bilateral relations because of Myanmar's unique geographical location and its strategic value to China. First, Myanmar is an important anchor for China's energy strategy. China-Myanmar energy cooperation not only broadens China's energy transportation channels, but also helps China greatly improve the security factor of energy transportation channels. Secondly, the strategic channel of China's foreign trade mainly depends on the Indian Ocean region, and as a country along the Indian Ocean, Myanmar has great value to promote China to the Indian Ocean. Therefore, from a geopolitical perspective, the friendly development of China-Myanmar relations is of great significance to China.

After the 2010 general election in Myanmar, along with the advancement of Myanmar's political reform, its domestic and foreign environment has changed. Especially after the democratically elected government took office, Chinese investment projects in Myanmar were immediately hit hard, and anti-Chinese sentiment in Myanmar also gradually increased. At the same time, the conflict between Myanmar

authorities and Myanmar ethnic local armed forces has directly threatened the stability of China's border and the safety of border residents. In addition, the infiltration of the United States, India, ASEAN and other forces in Myanmar has also impacted China's interests in Myanmar. All these phenomena have forced us to re-examine and reflect on China-Myanmar relations.

(2) Research Significance

China and Myanmar are each other's neighbors, and the development of bilateral relations is of great strategic significance to each other. The study of China-Myanmar relations after Myanmar's democratic transition can not only provide theoretical value to China's development of foreign relations, especially its relations with Myanmar, but also have practical significance.

1. From a macro perspective: After the reform and opening up in the late 20th century, China's comprehensive national strength and international status have undergone great changes. As Myanmar is China's neighbor, China-Myanmar relations will have an increasing impact on each other's strategic environment and future development. By studying the history and reality of bilateral relations with Myanmar, the strategic relations between China and Myanmar can be judged more clearly and concretely, the importance and complexity of China-Myanmar relations can be understood more deeply, and the surrounding environment of China's peaceful rise can be understood more soberly.

2. From the micro perspective: In-depth discussion of the following questions, such as: What is the internal relationship between Myanmar's domestic politics and its foreign policy? What are the areas involved in Myanmar's political transformation and what are the difficulties it faces? In what ways has Myanmar's political reform impacted China-Myanmar relations? How should China properly respond to the changes in China-Myanmar relations? This will help China correctly grasp the future trend of Myanmar's domestic and foreign affairs, objectively face the future trend of China-Myanmar relations, timely adjust its policy towards Myanmar to reverse China-Myanmar relations and continue to maintain China's power presence in Myanmar.

1.2 Research Review

(1) Foreign Research Status

Generally speaking, foreign scholars pay more attention to the study of China-Myanmar relations at the micro level than Chinese scholars, but it is inevitable to discuss the ideology. With the comprehensive promotion of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative and the acceleration of Myanmar's domestic reform process, the international research and attention on Myanmar and China-Myanmar relations will continue to increase.

Research related to China-Myanmar relations. Maung Aung Myoe, Institute of Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar's China Policy Since 1948, this book describes the development of China-Myanmar diplomatic relations in different periods and provides references for the two countries

by sorting out the characteristics of China-Myanmar diplomatic relations in different periods. *Modern China-Burma Relations: The Dilemma of Interdependence* by David Steinberg and Hongwei Fan of Xiamen University provides a systematic analysis of the relationship between Burma's independence in 1948 and Burma's democratic transition in 2011, and a concise analysis of the implications of Burma's upcoming political transition process. Dr. Chi-shad Liang, a scholar from Nanyang University of Singapore, elaborated the Neutralism Foreign policy of Myanmar in *Burma's Foreign Relations: Neutralism in Theory and Practice*. It will focus on Myanmar's relations with China, the United States and other countries in and outside the region.

2. Studies related to Myanmar's democratic reform and democratic political transformation. Myanmar has been studied quite extensively by foreign scholars. Compared with Chinese scholars, foreign researchers are more enthusiastic about the systematic study of Myanmar from multiple perspectives. Many foreign scholars have conducted an overview study on Myanmar before the "democratic" reform in 2011. From the perspective of political system, foreign scholars have systematically and completely explained the organization and structure of Myanmar's state and military government, so that we can systematically understand the domestic and international policies of Myanmar military government. For example, in his book *Political Order in Changing Societies* by Samuel Phillips Huntington takes the political development process of Myanmar as an example and discusses that in developing countries represented by Myanmar, under the background of the third wave of democratization,

The problem of matching the development of democracy and political order. Government and politics in Southeast Asia, edited by John Funston, published by Peking University Press, and Tarling Nicholas, translated by He Shengda and others, published by Yunnan People's Publishing House, The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia., elaborated on the domestic and foreign policies of Burma during the junta period. American scholar David Stein berg's article "Multiple Crises in Burma: Global Concerns and Myanmar's Response" describes four kinds of crises that Burma faced during the junta period. In his article "Crisis in Burma: The Role of International Aid in the Democratization Process", Moten Pedersen points out that despite the fierce conflicts and conflicts in Burma, the distribution of interests and power within the military government has become unshakable. Without the people who hold the military power, it is impossible to overthrow the military regime simply through the wishes of the citizens.

3. Studies on the history of Myanmar. The foreign research on Myanmar is early and involves a wide range of fields and perspectives. First of all, foreign scholars began to study Myanmar in the 19th century, starting from the study of Myanmar history. There are also some works by foreign scholars on the study of Myanmar history. Examples include :G.E. Harvey's Burmese History, Daniel George Edward Hall's A History of Southeast Asia, Peter Nicholas Tarling's The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Maung Tin Aung's History of Burma translated by He Shengda and other classic works on the general introduction of the country of Myanmar, which were translated

by Chinese scholars.

(2) Research Status in China

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the development of friendly diplomatic relations with neighboring countries has always been the focus of China's diplomacy, so the academic research on Myanmar has always been the focus of domestic academic circles. The research on Myanmar issues has shown a wide range of research, diverse perspectives and fruitful results.

1. Studies related to China-Myanmar relations. Chen Xiaofeng argued in the *Influence of Myanmar Reform on China-Myanmar Relations and China's Countermeasures* that after Myanmar's democratic reform, the policies implemented by the previous government were changed, so that the United States, Europe and other Western powers saw the changes in Myanmar and began to improve their relations with Myanmar one after another. According to Liu Xinsheng's article *Burma's Great Reform and Its Impact on China-Myanmar Relations*, since the new government of Myanmar came to power, it has taken the initiative to draw closer to ASEAN in terms of foreign policy and actively contacted with the United States, Europe and other Western countries, thus easing the relations between the West and Myanmar. In the face of Myanmar's diplomatic changes, China should timely adjust its foreign policy towards Myanmar and maintain the traditional friendship between the two countries. Fang Tianjian and He Yue argued in the *China Factor in the Adjustment of U.S. Policy toward Myanmar* that China directly influenced the formulation of U.S. policy toward

Myanmar. Ma Yanbing, in the Foreign Affairs Situation and Policy Trends After the Myanmar Election, believes that after the new government of Myanmar came into power, the political situation of Myanmar changed dramatically. Faced with the new situation of this sovereign country, Western countries began to reflect on their own policies towards Myanmar and gradually changed their previous policies. Wei Jianfeng, in China and India's Collision of Geopolitical Interests in Myanmar, tells that China's influence on Myanmar poses a threat to India's "eastward policy", and Myanmar becomes a place where the interests of China and India compete. In An Analysis of the Warming of India-Myanmar Relations in Recent Years, Luo Le pointed out that since the start of Myanmar's democratization process, Myanmar has been concerned about the threat of a powerful China to its national security, and has actively promoted the development of India-Myanmar relations to curb China's influence in Myanmar.

Secondly, articles on the development of bilateral relations since the independence of Myanmar can be found in some journals. Professors He Shengda and Fan Hongwei in particular have written commendable descriptions of China-Myanmar relations at this stage. For example, in his article 60 Years of China-Myanmar Relations: Development History and Historical Experience, Professor He Shengda reviewed the phased course of China-Myanmar relations and learned from it the experience of treating China-Myanmar relations in the new era. On the basis of declassified archives, Professor Fan Hongwei explained in detail the specific progress of the development of China-Myanmar relations under the background of the Cold War, such as the Sino-

Myanmar Relations in the Early Period of Diplomatic Relations (1949~1953) from the Declassified Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Division and Normalization of Sino-Myanmar Relations: 1967-1971, and the Healing of Sino-Myanmar Relations: 1972-1988. In addition, Liu Wu's "The Evolution of Myanmar's Foreign Policy after Independence and the Development of China-Myanmar Relations" and other articles summarized the policies of successive governments of Myanmar towards China since independence. In addition, there are some master's dissertations on Sino-Myanmar relations under the background of the Cold War and after the end of the Cold War, such as Tang Qingyun's Investigation of the Relations between China, the United States and Myanmar: 1961-1963, Jia Fan's Sino-Myanmar Relations After the Cold War, Yao Lu's Research on Sino-Myanmar Relations After the Cold War, Lin Lihui's Research on Sino-Myanmar Relations since 1988, etc.

2. It is related to the political transformation of Myanmar. Southeast Asia Longitudinal Journal publishes a research review on Myanmar's domestic political situation every year, paying close attention to the changes in Myanmar's domestic political situation. Through the review of these studies, it can be found that Myanmar's recent "democratic" transition is not achieved overnight, but the result of domestic political, economic, ethnic minority and other issues developed to a certain extent. The political transformation of Myanmar has provided a new research field for domestic scholars on Myanmar issues. Chinese scholars began to study the relationship between China and Myanmar against this background. In this context, from the perspective of

the changes in Myanmar's domestic political situation, Wang Zi Chang argued in his book *Progress or Regression - Myanmar 2010 General Election from the Perspective of Political Development* that although the new military government of Myanmar did hold the national election as planned after it came to power and won the election, it successfully won the power to continue to govern. It gave its regime a veneer of legitimacy, but the new junta barred it from taking part in national elections; And the internal pressure on the junta from other political forces in the country has not been eased by its election victory; Western countries are greatly dissatisfied with the election results of Myanmar and put enormous external pressure on Myanmar's military government. Myanmar's political transformation needs to move forward. On the contrary, Li Chenyang's "Analysis of Myanmar's Political Transformation Since 2010" compared Myanmar's 2010 general election with the 1990 general election, and held that although there were various flaws in the 2010 general election, it was of positive significance for promoting Myanmar's political development in the long run. The article also analyzes the significance of the newly elected government and the Democratic League led by Aung SAN Suu Kyi to the democratization process of Myanmar, and holds that there are still many obstacles in the democratic reform of Myanmar. Liu Xiang's *Research on the Democratization Process under the Government of Myanmar* made a detailed and systematic study of the democratization reform in Myanmar. He believed that the "democratization" in Myanmar originated from a process of multiple external and internal reasons and mutual influence and effect of multiple forces, and its

most fundamental purpose. It is to achieve the goal of national economic development, improvement of people's living standards, and continuous development and progress of national development. Introduction to Myanmar, edited by Zhong Zhixiang, starts from the foreign policies implemented by the Myanmar government in different historical periods, and expounds the characteristics of the foreign policies adopted by Myanmar. In the process of Myanmar's "democratization", scholars have also carefully studied Myanmar's foreign policy. You Hongbo's Foreign Policy of Myanmar in the Cold War Period, Liu Wu's Analysis of the Reasons for Myanmar's Foreign Policy of Neutrality in the Cold War Period, and Lin Kaisang's Analysis of Myanmar's Geopolitical Environment and Foreign Policy Choices Since its Independence pointed out that, The development of the world situation and neighboring countries have played a huge role in the formulation of Myanmar's foreign policy.

3.A study of the history of Burma. Since Myanmar had just gained independence, Chinese academic circles have focused on the study of Myanmar's history. For example, Yipei's Burma mainly studies the history of Burma. Zhu Zhihe's Myanmar is a comprehensive introduction of Myanmar from five perspectives, including history, geography, economy, culture and China-Myanmar relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar. Translated by Chen Yan and written by Bo Basin, Myanmar History is a comprehensive review of Myanmar's development process. Domestic scholars have used historical analysis methods to sort out the development process of China-Myanmar relations and combined with the

changes in the international environment and situation at that time, and made the conclusion that the bilateral relations will continue to develop in a good direction. China and Myanmar regard each other as "paukphaw".

1.3 Research Contents and Methods

1.3.1 Research Contents

This paper is composed of three parts: introduction, text and conclusion. The main text is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter is a historical review of the development of China-Myanmar relations after Myanmar's independence until Thein Sein's government came into power. Through a systematic review of China-Myanmar relations, it can be seen that although Myanmar's policies toward China in different periods have their own characteristics, they are generally positive and friendly to China and committed to maintaining and developing China-Myanmar relations.

The second, third and fourth chapters are based on the "democratization" process of Myanmar, sorting out and analyzing the China-Myanmar relations (2010-2022) After the Myanmar's Democratic Transformation, including the background of the policies of various governments towards China After the Myanmar's Democratic Transformation, the government's policies towards China, and the reality of China-Myanmar relations during the government period. Through a detailed analysis of the contents, characteristics and influencing factors of Myanmar's policy towards China in the process of "democratization" and its influence on China-Myanmar relations, it can

be seen that Myanmar's policy towards China will not change at the strategic level of being friendly to China and committed to developing cooperative partnership with China, but at the tactical level, Myanmar is somewhat alienated from China. This led to certain twists and turns in China-Myanmar relations during this period.

The fifth chapter is based on the systematic analysis of Myanmar's policy towards China in the process of "democratization", and makes a prediction of the future development of Myanmar and the development prospect of China-Myanmar relations.

1.3.2 Research Methods

(1) Literature Review Method

Through the collection of a large number of domestic and foreign works and nuclear journal articles, in-depth study of Myanmar's domestic situation and the dynamics of China-Myanmar diplomatic relations, so as to make the content of the paper more accurate and substantial.

(2) Historical Analysis Method

By tracing the development of China-Myanmar relations in history, we can find out the cause and origin of the Myanmar issue and predict the possibility of future trend. Look at the development of China-Myanmar relations from a historical and holistic perspective.

1.4 Concept Interpretation

(1) Military Junta

Military junta refers to a national government in which the actual power is held by

the military, and a military junta state is "a country in which the actual supreme power is held by the military clique". The junta has the following characteristics: first, the actual supreme power is in the hands of the army and military clique; The second is mainly through the way of armed coup; Third, the government is composed mainly of soldiers or retired officers from the military; Fourth, it only has authority but lacks legitimacy.

The Burmese military government refers to the national government of Burma controlled by a military interest group consisting of the Burmese Defense Forces from 1962 to 2015. On January 4, 1948, after a long struggle for independence, Myanmar finally got rid of British colonial rule, declared its independence, and established a parliamentary democracy. In the early days of independence, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League basically took power. However, this league was not a political party in the true sense. Instead, it consisted of many different parties, groups, and individuals. In the face of ethnic conflicts and armed rebellions in Myanmar, the country showed weakness and internal divisions and struggles occurred in the 1950s. (2009) In 1962, Myanmar's internal contradictions worsened and the differences within the ruling coalition could not be bridged. General Ne Win led the National Defense Forces to launch a coup and took over the country. Since then, Myanmar has entered the era of military government.

After the Ne Win government came to power, it proposed to realize "Burmese Way to Socialism" and set up the Burma Socialist Programme Party to nationalize the

economy and centralize the planned economy. In the early stage, this policy played a certain role in improving Myanmar's economic situation. However, with the rigidity of the economic system, the domestic economic situation deteriorated again, and social contradictions also intensified. Discontent boiled over in 1988 with anti-government demonstrations across the country, demanding the ouster of the junta led by Ne Win. The political turmoil that swept the country culminated in a coup by another junta general, Saw Maung. Saw Maung's government repealed many of Ne Win's decrees, and "Burmese socialism" collapsed.

In the academic circles, the Myanmar military regime after Saw Maung in 1988 was called the "new military regime", but in fact, there was no essential difference between it and Ne Win military regime. Both of them were dominated by the military clique, which monopolized the state power and controlled the national government. In 2011, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, backed by Myanmar's military government, won the election and formed a new government, It was only with the victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in the 2015 general election that the National government broke the monopoly of power on the country by the junta.

(2) Authoritarian Regime

Authoritarian regimes first appeared in the 1930s. After World War II, they emerged in developing countries in East Asia and Latin America, which tried to promote the construction of national modernization through authoritarian regimes. Juan Linz, a professor at Yale University, argues that authoritarians are transitional regimes

between "totalitarian regimes" and "democratic regimes" that are neither totalitarian nor democratic. This political system does not have a broad and deep popular base. In many cases, the governing power is held by the leader, and sometimes even exercised by a small group of rulers. So authoritarianism has no clear limits on the exercise of power, and its practicality is largely predictable. (Juan, 2001) According to Feng, a professor at the Institute of World History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, national development is a process from totalitarianism to authoritarianism, with authoritarian regimes taking on the mantle of democracy to gain power and govern the country "above board". It's not like a democracy, it's not like a coercive dictatorship.

Since the military coup launched by Ne Win era in 1962, Myanmar has been a typical military authoritarian regime. The specific performance is as follows: first, from Ne Win to Saw Maung and then to Than Shwe, the politics of Myanmar is a one-party dictatorship; Second, the country's political power has always been in the hands of the military, and the actual holders of state power are senior military officers; Third, in the governance of the country, the economy is completely planned by the central unity, and the social culture is manifested as the elimination of pluralism. Fourth, the protection of the Burman ethnic group and the oppression of ethnic minorities.

(3) Democracy, Democratization and Democratic Transformation

Democracy is not only an ideology, but also a political system. Its core meaning is that the power is controlled by the majority of citizens and the interests of the majority of citizens are protected. In the form of the form of nationwide competitive elections.

The opposite of "democracy" as a political system is "authoritarian regime" .

Democratization refers to the transformation of a country's political organization from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one. In his book *Democracy's Third Wave*, Samuel Huntington explained the "democratization wave" as the transformation of a group of countries from non-democratic regime (generally authoritarian regime) to democratic regime in a certain period. It can be seen that democratization is not a static state, but a continuous transformation process. The key to this transformation is the establishment of an electoral system. (Adam, 2005) Although many scholars have criticized electoral democracy, it is undeniable that election is an unavoidable link on the road of authoritarian regime to democracy, because election is crucial to the realization of civil rights and the transfer of political power.

The concept of "democratic transformation" is similar to that of "democratisation" in that both refer to a dynamic process of change, with the difference being that the latter covers a larger time horizon. Dankwart A. Rustow first proposed the theory of democratic transition. He divides the process of democratization into three different stages: the first stage is the preparation stage, when the original authoritarian regime collapses; the second stage is the decision stage, when A new democratic order begins to be established; The third stage is the consolidation stage, in which the established democratic order is internalized and the citizens' ideology and social culture, and the democratic system takes root thoroughly. "According to Rostow's theory, we can regard the democratic transition as a link in the process of democratization. (Dankwart, 1970)

Compared with the democratic transition, the process of democratization has an additional stage of consolidation. In other words, the democratic transition is not sure whether the result of the transition is successful. In order to consolidate the transformation that has taken place and complete the democratization completely, it needs to be consolidated on the basis of the democratic transition.

The authoritarian regime of Myanmar refers to the military junta ruled by the military clique. In this paper, the democratization process or democratic transition of Myanmar refers to the transition from the authoritarian rule of the military clique to the democratic system dominated by the elected civilian government.

Chapter 1: The Development History of China-Myanmar Relations Before the Myanmar's Democratic Transformation(1950-2011)

It has been 73 years since China and Myanmar established diplomatic relations on June 8, 1950. The history of China-Myanmar relations before the Myanmar's Democratic Transformation can be roughly divided into three periods: the first period was from 1950 to February 1962, when Myanmar was in parliamentary democracy; the second period was from March 1962 to August 1988, when Ne Win Junta and the Burma Socialist Programme Party were in power. The third period was from September 1988, when Myanmar's new military government came to power, until Thein Sein came to power. The three periods of China-Myanmar relations obviously have different characteristics and contents. At the same time, these three periods of China-Myanmar relations are closely related to the three different governments that have developed in

Myanmar since independence, reflecting the close relationship between Myanmar's ruling clique and its external relations and relations with China. This chapter mainly discusses the main development course and characteristics of China-Myanmar relations in these three periods, and on this basis makes a brief discussion on the historical experience and trend of China-Myanmar relations.

1.1 China-Myanmar Relations From 1950 to 1962: Laying the Foundation

Myanmar established diplomatic relations with New China on June 8, 1950, and was the first non-socialist country to recognize New China. At that time, leftist political groups and Chinese communities in Myanmar put strong pressure on the Myanmar government to recognize the New China as soon as possible. Prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar, the negotiations on the severing of relations between Myanmar and the Medical Democratic Party and the disposal of various organizations and properties owned by the Kuomintang in Myanmar were very smooth, which reflected the strong willingness of Myanmar to establish diplomatic ties with New China. However, due to the influence of political system and western powers, the relationship between China and Myanmar was quite cold in the early days of the establishment of diplomatic ties. (Fan, 2008) The enthusiasm for the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Myanmar has not immediately translated into momentum for the development of bilateral relations. In the early days of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the relationship between the two countries was relatively cold and estranged mainly because of the influence of their foreign policies

and mutual understanding. After independence, Burma initially tried to establish and maintain close relations with Britain and the United States. However, both China and Myanmar soon adjusted their policies towards each other in response to the changes in the external situation and the needs of their respective internal affairs, and began to actively develop bilateral relations.

From 1950 to 1962, China and Myanmar experienced from the initial suspicion and indifference to the gradual establishment of the "Pauk phaw" relationship and Pauk phaw Friendship, which was the period of the most close and friendly relationship between China and Myanmar during the Cold War. In order to dispel Myanmar's fear and suspicion of China and the Communist Party of China (CPC), China has repeatedly promised Myanmar not to export revolution, not to use overseas Chinese to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs, and encouraged the majority of overseas Chinese to take up Myanmar citizenship. Myanmar adheres to a neutral foreign policy and has not joined the Western camp in criticizing China on international and regional occasions. When the United States vigorously organized an anti-China encircle, formed the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, and adopted a containment policy against the new China, Myanmar opened up a new foreign route for China, namely the famous "Rangoon Corridor", connecting China's Yunnan province with some third world countries, and exported rubber to China to oppose the United Nations restrictions on China. During this period, there were frequent high-level exchanges between the governments of China and Myanmar. Premier Zhou Enlai visited Myanmar five times and Myanmar

Prime Minister U Nu visited China six times. In 1954, Prime Ministers of China and Myanmar exchanged visits and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited India and Myanmar. In the Joint Statement of Prime Ministers of China and Myanmar issued on June 29 of the same year, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were confirmed as the guiding principles for bilateral relations. Later, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were formally put forward and became norms for handling international relations. They jointly put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as diplomatic principles that guide bilateral relations and international relations.(China, 2022) Thus, freed from the shackles of colonial rule and civil war, China found a new starting point for the development of bilateral relations in line with the fundamental interests of both countries.

It is worth noting that it was during the settlement of the border issue between the two sides in 1956-1961 that "Paukphaw" gradually became the term by which the two sides defined China-Myanmar relations. During the exchange of visits between the prime ministers of China and Myanmar in 1954, although both emphasized the traditional and historical heritage of friendship in the development of bilateral relations in the new era, and both used the term "kindred"(亲戚) and "the same lineage" in terms of ethnicity, they did not yet use or find the word "paukphaw", the traditional appellation of Sino-Myanmar ethnic relations, to describe and locate. In 1960, China and Myanmar signed the Border Treaty between the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Union of Myanmar. (*Agreement between the Government of the*

People's Republic of China and the Government of the Union of Myanmar on the boundary Question between the two countries) It was the first time that the People's Republic of China resolved boundary issues left over from history with neighboring countries. During this period, China and Myanmar established and developed the "paukphaw" friendship, which laid an important foundation for the friendly development of bilateral relations.

1.2 China-Myanmar Relations From 1962 to 1988: Twists and Turns and Steady Development

From 1962 to 1970, Myanmar's Ne Win military government came to power and began to implement The so-called "Burmese Way to Socialism", while China went through The Cultural Revolution, and China-Myanmar relations deteriorated sharply in the late 1960s. Anti-Chinese riots in Burma in 1967 even caused a rupture in relations between the two countries. In June 1967, as China's "The Cultural Revolution" spread to Myanmar, an anti-Chinese incident occurred in Rangoon, and the "pauk-phaw" relations between China and Myanmar encountered a challenge. China and Myanmar have withdrawn their ambassadors from each other's countries and China has suspended a series of aid to Myanmar. But the two countries have since sought opportunities to actively ease relations and gradually reduce confrontation. In October 1970, Myanmar appointed a new ambassador to China, and in March 1971, the new Chinese ambassador to Myanmar returned to Rangoon, and the two countries normalized relations. In August of the same year, Ne Win was invited to visit China. Both sides reviewed their mistakes

and China explained to Myanmar that the incident was influenced by the extreme left ideological trend in China, rather than a fundamental change in China's policy towards Myanmar. Ne Win expressed "deep regret" over the incident and thanked China for giving him the opportunity to come and explain any misunderstandings between the two countries. Generally speaking, the Ne Win government has no intention to establish close relations with other countries due to its passive neutralism policy in diplomacy. Therefore, China-Myanmar relations appear to be good but not hot, and cooperation in economic and trade fields is limited. However, at the end of the Cold War, there are new signs of development in China-Myanmar relations. In 1987, two-way trade exceeded the US \$100 million mark for the first time, with a year-on-year growth of 96 percent, and further increased to US \$250 million in 1988. (Men, 2015) This new development is driven by the opening of the bilateral border for trade, which has subsequently increasingly become a new growth pole for the development of China-Myanmar relations. Since then, China-Myanmar relations have basically maintained steady development until 1988.

1.3 China-Myanmar Relations 1988-2010: Continuous Improvement and All-Round Development

In 1988, at the end of the Cold War, Burma also entered a new era. That year, Ne Win's 26-year Socialist Burma campaign, called 'Burmese Way to Socialism,' failed and Myanmar staged massive protests and the bloody '8888 Uprising,' which resulted in the establishment of the State Law and Order Restoration Council Restoration

Council (later renamed the State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC) took over at a time when social order was on the verge of collapse. At this time, Myanmar's social order is on the verge of collapse. Western countries, led by the United States, imposed sanctions and exerted diplomatic pressure on Myanmar after the international community strongly criticized the military junta for its violent suppression of the pro-democracy movement and its refusal to accept the results of the 1990 general election. Myanmar faces internal and external difficulties and its economy is on the verge of collapse. In order to counter Western isolation, Myanmar has to choose to seek help from China and rely more on China. China, with its traditional friendship with Myanmar and the need to break Western sanctions, has chosen to provide comprehensive political, economic and security support to Myanmar, and the two countries have once again established close ties. After 1992, Myanmar gradually adjusted its foreign policy, tried to change its over-dependence on China, actively developed relations with ASEAN, India and other countries, and actively sought friendship with the West. However, China-Myanmar relations are still the most important for Myanmar. Since 2000, China's economy has maintained rapid growth, and China-Myanmar economic and trade cooperation has reached an unprecedented level in both depth and breadth. The trade volume between the two countries was only 220 million US dollars in 1989-1990, but it rose to 2.626 billion US dollars in 2008. In 2009, China surpassed Thailand to become Myanmar's largest trading partner. (He, 2010) It can be said that the 20 years after 1988 were a period of relative dependence

on China. After 2000, driven by China's demand for foreign investment, Myanmar has become an important object for China to carry out economic and trade cooperation and build new energy channels.

Chapter 2: China-Myanmar Relations During Thein Sein Administration (2011 - 2016)

On May 26, 2011, Thein Sein visited China and the two countries established a "comprehensive strategic partnership". China became the first country to establish a comprehensive cooperative partnership with Myanmar, marking a new stage of bilateral relations. In 2011, the government of Thein Sein took office in Myanmar, which gradually transformed from authoritarian politics to democratic government. At the same time, Myanmar opened to the outside world in an all-round way and actively expanded exchanges with other countries. During this period, on the one hand, Myanmar maintained a good cooperative relationship with China and built a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership with China. On the other hand, it moves closer to the West to balance China's influence. The rapid thawing of US-Myanmar relations has greatly reduced the external threats facing Myanmar. Japan, South Korea and European countries have increased their investment and assistance to Myanmar, and China is no longer the only partner for Myanmar. The Thein Sein government responded to anti-China voices at home by suspending construction of the Myitsone Dam and other actions, and presented a new image to the international community. Many major Chinese projects in Myanmar have encountered resistance or been put on hold. However, relations with China remain the focus of Myanmar's

diplomacy. President Thein Sein has visited China six times in five years, which reflects the great importance he attaches to China-Myanmar relations, which have maintained a sound momentum of development on the whole.

2.1 Background of Myanmar's Democratic Transformation

(1) 2010 Myanmar General Election

General elections were held on 7 November 2010 under the new constitution, which was approved in a referendum in May 2008. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) announced the election date on August 13th. (Wang, 2012) More than 3,000 candidates from 37 political parties and 82 independent candidates are running for 1,159 seats in the Lok Sabha and House of Nationalities, as well as state and provincial assemblies. The party fielded 1,112 candidates, the largest number of candidates in the presidential election. With the National League for Democracy (NLD) boycotting the election and withdrawing, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) biggest rival is the National Unity Party (NUP), which has a long history and broad base in Myanmar. The National Unity Party (NUP), a successor to the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) that ruled under Ne Win, fielded nearly 1,000 candidates in the election, as many as the Development Party. On November 17, 2010, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) had won more than 70 percent of all parliamentary seats, including 259 Lok Sabha seats, 129 Ethnic Sabha seats and 495 provincial and state assembly seats. (Hao, 2012) Within 90 days of the election, the Federal Assembly elected in the general election will convene for the first time to elect

a president and vice president and form a new government, after which the military government will hand over power to an elected the Union Solidarity and Development Party(USDP) government.

This marks the completion of Burma's transition from a military government to an elected one. At this point, after eight years of efforts, Myanmar's "roadmap to democracy" has officially come to an end, and Myanmar is moving toward the road of political transformation to build "disciplined democracy". "Power in Myanmar's domestic politics is formed into four power blocks: the military represented by Than Shwe and Min Aung Hlaing, the government represented by U Thein Sein, the ruling party represented by U Shwe Mann, and the Democratic Party represented by Aung SAN Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy." Overall, the changes in Burma's election are generally positive. This step-by-step and slowly advancing reform path is the political development framework of Myanmar's domestic realistic political ecology, which finally realized the peaceful transfer of power, and the military government finally completed the smooth transition of military authoritarian rule through this step. This election has played a positive role in promoting national and social stability in Myanmar.

2.2 Myanmar's Policy Towards China During the Thein Sein Administration

Since Myanmar's independence, its foreign policy has been changing, but generally reflects the characteristics of non-alignment and great power balance. In December 1949, U Nu proposed a foreign policy of neutrality and non-alliance in external affairs,

which became the cornerstone of the foreign policy of successive governments of Myanmar. As an important component of Myanmar's foreign policy, the overall goal of China's policy in Myanmar is to seek good-neighborly relations and guarantee national security. Although this goal is no different from that of other countries' foreign policies, it is of special significance to Myanmar, which is in a sensitive geopolitical situation. The geographical location of Myanmar has always been an important factor affecting its foreign policy. Both the civilian government and the later military government stressed that the best way to ensure the independence and security of Myanmar was to maintain friendly relations and non-alignment with all countries, without giving the major powers a reason to invade Burma.

After U Thein Sein took office, the government began to adopt a more flexible foreign policy beyond traditional diplomacy in order to secure broad international support for the 2010 elections. In his inaugural speech, Thein Sein reviewed Myanmar's foreign policy, which is mainly that Myanmar has followed a non-aligned and independent foreign policy since independence, handled its relations with other countries in accordance with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, never yielded to external forces, maintained neutrality in international relations, refused to allow foreign troops to enter Myanmar, and never interfered in other countries' internal affairs. It has never posed a threat to international and regional security, and has stated that this is the pride of Myanmar's foreign policy. On the basis of adhering to these principles, the government it has formed continues to develop relations with all countries, actively

participates in international and regional organizations, and wins the respect of the international community.

2.3 China-Myanmar Relations Under Their Sein Administration

2.3.1 Economic Relationships

The economic cooperation between China and Myanmar began in the 1950s, and in a period of time it was mainly characterized by trade cooperation and China's economic and technical assistance to Myanmar. Since the implementation of reform and opening-up in 1978, China has actively participated in international economic cooperation. Neighboring countries such as Myanmar have become important targets of China's foreign economic cooperation due to their geographical advantages. The strong complementarity of economic development and the high mutual need of economic cooperation have become the main driving force for the development of China-Myanmar economic relations. (*The total investment is the first of the People's Republic of China, China's Ministry of Commerce website, 2018*) In 1988, Myanmar began to develop a market economy and implement the policy of opening to the outside world, and the development of China-Myanmar economic relations entered a new stage. In 2011, Myanmar implemented economic reform and gradually opened its market. Myanmar began to become a hot spot for foreign investment. (*Data from the official website of petrochina, 2001*)

(1) Energy Cooperation Between China and Myanmar

1. China-Myanmar Oil and Gas Pipelines

From June 2 to 3, 2010, then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Myanmar to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. During their two-day visit, the two leaders officially launched the construction of a China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline, China's official People's Daily reported on June 5, "including a 793-kilometre gasoline pipeline and a 771-kilometre crude oil pipeline in Myanmar. The oil port at Kyaukpyu is being built as part of the planned China-Myanmar oil pipeline project. Government officials and experts from Yunnan Province played a major role in proposing, discussing and preparing for the first phase of the project. Yunnan Province is the most active and committed contributor to the China-Myanmar pipeline project. Prior to this, Yunnan province has done a lot of preparatory work on related infrastructure. Because the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline project is one of the 20 key construction projects of Yunnan Provincial government in 2007 and 2008, Yunnan province set up a special organization to deal with this project. By the end of 2009, the first phase of the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline in China began construction in September 2010, was completed in 2013 and has been put into use.

However, the future of China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline construction is difficult to predict. One is obstruction from Western powers. In the initial stages of the deal, the pipeline faced competition from a number of oil companies, most notably the Japanese. On March 1, 2012, a petition jointly signed by nine organizations and 130 ngos from 20 countries was sent to Myanmar President Thein Sein, publicly calling for

a halt to the development of offshore oil and gas fields in northwestern Myanmar and the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline project. Second, the residents along the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline do not recognize. Some people in Myanmar dislike the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline project because the benefits are not equally shared with them. In particular, the people whose land is occupied or affected along the way are not satisfied with the compensation, or think that their living environment will be damaged, and even require the construction unit to undertake rural development, electricity transmission and lighting, which are not within the scope of the agreement. By 2013, Southeast Asia Pipeline Company has invested at least 20 million US dollars in the people's livelihood, mainly for the construction of education, medical care, electricity and other infrastructure along the route. Due to the frequent protests of some people in Myanmar, the project has been delayed and cost overspent. The project was originally planned to invest 2.54 billion US dollars. It eventually reached \$5 billion. (Li, 2014) Third, the malicious threat of ethnic minority armed forces. On June 9, 2011, the armed conflict between Myanmar government forces and the Kachin Independence Army broke out. As the scale of the conflict expands, the safety of the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline has received more attention. Before entering Ruili, the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline passes not only through an area controlled by the Kachin Independence Army, but also through the "Kachin Area" manned by the Kachin Independence Army on September 23, 1961, in the name of protecting the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline.

2. The Myitson Hydropower Station

Myanmar is rich in hydropower resources. The Irrawaddy River and the Salween River provide unique natural conditions for the development of hydroelectric power generation. Therefore, Myanmar's hydropower resources are mainly these two main rivers. "By 2012, Chinese enterprises had cooperated in the development of 24 hydropower projects in Myanmar, with a total installed capacity of 50,219,000-52,719,000 kW". China's investment in hydropower projects in Myanmar has greatly eased the electricity shortage in Myanmar, promoted its economic development and improved its people's living standards. Nevertheless, the first test of China-Myanmar relations came in 2011, which was the Myitsone hydropower Station incident.

Myitsone is built at the confluence of the Meikhai and Mailikhai rivers, which originate from the Irrawaddy, considered the "river of life" in Myanmar. Myitsone Hydropower Station is the first of seven cascaded hydropower stations with a total installed capacity of 21.5 million kw invested by China Power Investment Group in the upper main stream of the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. With a installed capacity of 6 million kW, Myitsone hydropower station is the largest hydropower station in Myanmar. It is expected that the first hydropower station will generate electricity in 2017. China is spending \$3.6 billion upfront on the project, which is scheduled to run for 50 years. Most of the electricity will go to China, while Myanmar will receive a lot of revenue, estimated at \$54 billion over the time frame. On September 30, 2011, President U Thein Sein of Myanmar announced that the government would suspend the construction of

the Myitsone hydropower station during his term in office in response to public concerns about environmental damage, mass migration and safety risks.

3. Lepidang Copper Mine Incident

Myanmar Laibitang Copper Mine is located in Sagaing province in northwest Myanmar. It is one of the large-scale cooperation projects between China and Myanmar. On June 3, 2010, the product-sharing cooperation contract for this project was signed in the presence of the Prime ministers of China and Myanmar. On July 8, 2011, Sinohydro Construction Co., Ltd. won the bid to construct the Laibitang Copper Mine project. With a total investment of \$106.5 billion, the project is designed to produce 100,000 tons of cathode copper per year. On March 20, 2012, the foundation stone laying ceremony was held, marking the full start of the construction work of Laibitang Copper Mine. But the project was suspended twice in June 2012 and November 2012 due to protests over evictions and land compensation. On November 18, local farmers, monks and activists in Monywa, Sagaing province, entered the site of the Lepidang copper mine, halting construction amid fierce protests. In an effort to control the situation, on Nov. 29, then-President U Thein Sein ordered Myanmar police to clear the protest site with water cannon and smoke bombs, injuring 27 monks. On December 3, President U Thein Sein appointed a 16-member commission of inquiry chaired by Aung SAN Suu Kyi to investigate and evaluate the Laipyitang copper mine project. On March 12, 2013, the commission submitted its final report to the Myanmar government, saying that the project should continue subject to improvement. As the conflict eased and

interests were redistributed, the Leybitang copper mine began a limited resumption of operations in February 2014.

(2) China's Investment In Myanmar

Myanmar's economic development is mainly financed by domestic investment and foreign investment. The Thein Sein government continued to optimize the domestic investment environment. On November 2, 2012, President Thein Sein signed the new Foreign Investment Law, and on January 31, 2013, the Implementation Rules of the Foreign Investment Law were promulgated. On February 28, 2013, Myanmar published the draft of the new Law on Special Economic Zones, which further explained the tax situation of foreign enterprises in Myanmar. In addition, Myanmar has set up old industrial zones in Naypyidaw and Nam Weng district of Shan State, and foreign investment offices in Yangon and Mandalay to further attract foreign investment.

By October 2010, China (including Hong Kong, China) had invested 12.32 billion US dollars in Myanmar, making it the largest investor in Myanmar ". (2010-05-06) ahead of other countries and regions, accounting for 33.98% of Myanmar's foreign investment. In 2011, FDI in Myanmar increased from \$3.02 billion in 2010 to \$20 billion. Unfortunately, this was the peak of FDI in Myanmar, as the figure continued to decline in the following two years. In 2011-2012, FDI in Myanmar was \$4.644 billion. China's investment in Myanmar was \$4.346 billion, accounting for the vast majority of the total foreign investment. "Total foreign investment in fiscal 2012-2013 was only \$1.419 billion." "China's investment in Myanmar decreased significantly, to only \$407

million, but it was still the largest source of foreign investment in Myanmar that year," he said. It was Myanmar's largest trading partner at the time. In 2012, our direct investment flow to Myanmar was US \$190 million, down 59 percent. In the fiscal year 2013-2014, China's investment in Myanmar was 56 million US dollars, which was the least amount of Chinese investment in Myanmar during the Thein Sein administration. In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, Myanmar attracted a total of 6.3 billion US dollars of foreign investment, while the Chinese mainland invested 517 million US dollars, ranking fourth, making it a key year for China's investment in Myanmar to stop falling and recover. By the end of December 2015, foreign investment in Myanmar totaled 5.3 billion U.S. dollars. China's investment in Myanmar reached 670 million U.S. dollars, ranking second, while Singapore's investment reached nearly 3 billion U.S. dollars, ranking first.

At the same time, the total amount of foreign investment in Myanmar has soared." This is related to Myanmar's unilateral suspension of Chinese investment projects in Myanmar, which has increased the political risks of Chinese enterprises in Myanmar. It is also related to the lack of competitiveness of Chinese enterprises in Myanmar. During the military regime, Chinese enterprises could get good projects as long as they had good relations with the upper class, and almost only Chinese enterprises invested in Myanmar. Over time, Chinese enterprises gradually lost their competitiveness. However, after Thein Sein's government came to power, it loosened restrictions on foreign investment, and foreign investment began to favor the Myanmar market. As all

major projects were put to tender, the disadvantage of Chinese enterprises' lack of competitiveness began to emerge.

3. China's Assistance to Myanmar Has Continued

On December 18, 2011, the contract for the construction of hospitals and health centers along the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline was signed. In addition to the annual donation of \$6 million to Myanmar's public welfare, petrochina will also donate \$1 million to the oil and gas pipelines in the two countries each year. The next day, the construction of Naypyidaw Airport, financed by loans from China, was completed. But with a massive drop in Chinese investment in Myanmar in 2012, China's 30 billion yuan aid project to the country has been slowly moving forward. In contrast, Western countries, especially Japan, have been more active in helping Burma, and the World Bank and other organizations have also launched aid to Burma. On December 31, 2012, Li Junhua, former Chinese ambassador to Myanmar, and Wu Pengrui, former Vice Minister of Social Welfare and Resettlement of Myanmar, signed the Agreement on Economic and Technological Cooperation between China and Myanmar, which aims to help Myanmar resettle the displaced persons in Rakhine State and the victims in the earthquake-stricken northern Myanmar. According to the agreement, the Chinese government donated 350 integrated houses to Myanmar. In December 2013, petrochina Southeast Asia Pipeline Company assisted the construction of 45 primary and secondary schools, 3 hospitals, 21 medical sub-stations, Madeh Island Reservoir, and power transmission lines in Rakhine State in the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline

(overseas section), with a cumulative investment of nearly 20 million US dollars. Before the Myitsone hydropower station was suspended, China Power Investment Yunnan International Power Investment Co., Ltd. had built 414 houses and other supporting buildings for the migrants, and each family was given a 21-inch color television. Even after the project was suspended, local residents continued to receive one kilogram of rice per family every day. (*Official website of Department of Asian Affairs of Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China: Brief Introduction of China-Myanmar Economic and Trade Cooperation, 2013*)

2.3.2 Political Relations

In May 2011, the President of Myanmar paid his first state visit to China, during which he issued a "joint statement" with China to establish the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. Later, in April 2013, the two countries issued a "joint communique" to emphasize the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. In June 2013, The two countries signed relevant "action plans", and in November 2014, during the Chinese premier's visit to Myanmar, the two countries signed a joint statement on deepening "the comprehensive strategic partnership". Obviously, the two countries define bilateral relationship as "strategic" relationship and continue to strengthen this "strategic" relationship.

During his visit to China in May 2011, Myanmar's president said that the relationship with China is the closest and most important bilateral relationship in Myanmar's diplomacy. The Chinese Premier, chairman of the National People's

Congress and chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) have been visiting Myanmar. As soon as the new government of Myanmar was formed, Chinese CPPCC members visited Myanmar. The Myanmar President visited China six times between 2011 and 2014. In November 2014, the Myanmar President went to Beijing and the Chinese Premier to Naypyidaw. Myanmar's basic diplomatic position towards China is clear.

During 2014-2015, there were frequent visits of high-level officials and governments between China and Myanmar. On June 27, 2014, President U Thein Sein of Myanmar paid a friendly visit to China. On August 11, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Myanmar. "On September 12, Wang Jiarui, Vice chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, visited Myanmar and met with Myanmar President U Thein Sein and Parliament Speaker U Shwe Mann, as well as major leaders of the Myanmar military and the National League for Democracy." On September 24, Chinese Agriculture Minister Han Changfu and his delegation visited Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, to attend the ASEAN Agriculture Ministers' Meetings and met with former Myanmar President U Thein Sein. On November 7, President Thein Sein met with a number of Chinese leaders during his visit to Beijing for the Asia-Pacific Summit. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang attends the 17th ASEAN-China Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, Nov. 13, 2017. On January 14, the two sides signed cooperation documents totaling 8 billion US dollars in such areas as economy, trade and agriculture.

On March 4, 2015, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin visited Myanmar to exchange views on the situation in northern Myanmar. On March 9, Comrade Liu Zhenmin led a delegation to discuss the Kokang refugee issue with Myanmar representatives in Musha City. On April 2, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with U Wunna Maung Lwin, former special envoy of Myanmar President, who visited Beijing. U Wunna Maung Lwin apologized to China on behalf of the Myanmar government and military for the incident in March in which a Myanmar military plane caused casualties among Chinese border residents. From November 3 to 10, Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and other officials went to Myanmar as the Chinese observer mission to observe the 2015 general election in Myanmar.

2.3.3 Cultural Exchange

People-to-people exchanges between China and Myanmar have made great progress compared with the military government before Thein Sein. During Thein Sein's administration, cultural exchanges mainly focused on arts, media, sports, academic and other fields. The China-Myanmar Friendship Association was resumed in April 2011 and formally established in April 2013. Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Geng Zhiyuan serves as the vice Chairman of the China-Myanmar Friendship Association. The Thein Sein government has organized many surveys and public welfare activities by Chinese entrepreneurs in Myanmar. In addition to meeting Aung SAN Suu Kyi, the China-Myanmar Friendship Association also invited the Myanmar-

China Friendship Association and 88 students to visit China. In addition, the China Foundation for Peace and Development, the China Society for International Exchanges of Non-governmental Organizations, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and the China Society for International Friendship and Liaison are actively developing business in Myanmar. On May 14, 2013, China NGO Association for the Promotion of International Exchanges and Myanmar Resources Development Institute held a roundtable meeting on "Pooling Folk Wisdom for Win-win Development" in Kunming.

In early November 2011, Chinese Buddhist relics were sent to Naypyidaw, Rangoon and Mandalay for the people of Myanmar to worship. On June 30, 2014, President Thein Sein and 72 other people attended the inauguration ceremony of the Burma-style Buddhist Hall and the Ceremony of the Buddhist Temple in Luoyang, Henan Province. They were warmly welcomed by many leaders of the Buddhist Association of China and hundreds of monks and lay people. In 2011, the Chinese Disabled Persons Art Troupe was invited to Naypyidaw and Rangoon for a two-month performance, which was well received by the Myanmar people. In upper 2012, the Chinese acrobatic Troupe was invited to visit Myanmar. The high level of Chinese acrobatics deeply shocked the audiences in Mandalay, Yangon and Naypyidaw, deepening their understanding of Chinese culture. In 2014, the Macao Art Troupe participated in the "Happy Chinese New Year" series of activities held in Myanmar. In early April, Myanmar Vice President U Nyan Thun led a delegation to Beijing and attended the opening ceremony of the 2014 China-Asean Cultural Exchange Year. At

the end of the year, Li Yuanchao led a delegation to attend the closing ceremony of the 2014 China-Asean Cultural Exchange Year held in Naypyidaw. In December 2011, Director Liu Peng of the General Administration of Sport of the People's Republic of China led a delegation to Myanmar and renewed the Sports Cooperation Agreement between the General Administration of Sport of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Sport of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with Wu Dingshan, Minister of Sport of Myanmar. In January 2013, the Center for Myanmar Studies of Yunnan University invited five media organizations from Myanmar to visit Yunnan to exchange experience. Academic exchanges between the two sides have been enhanced. In April 2012, at the invitation of the Center for Myanmar Studies of Yunnan University, Wu Ge Lai and Wu Naisingla delivered a speech at Yunnan University. Wu Brother Rai, former Chief Political adviser to Myanmar President and Wu Naisinra, former political adviser to Myanmar President, visited Yunnan University and Shanghai Institute of International Studies in China from May 24 to 25, 2012. In February 2014, 15 graduate students from the University of Yangon visited Yunnan and Guangzhou at the invitation of the center. (Tang, 2015)

Chapter 3: China-Myanmar Relations in The Period of National League for Democracy Came To Power (2015-2021)

Aung SAN Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory in 2015 elections and came to power in 2016, forming the first non-military government in half a century. Aung SAN Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy came to power in 2016 after winning general

elections. The NLD government has not turned to the West. Compared with the Thein Sein government, the rising trend of China-Myanmar relations is more obvious. China stresses that it respects Myanmar's will, participates in Myanmar's peace process in a constructive way, provides necessary assistance to Myanmar to properly resolve the Rohingya crisis, and encourages Chinese companies investing in Myanmar to actively shoulder their social responsibilities. Moreover, the Democratic League government has increased its demand for China's economic development and actively participated in the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. The two sides reached an important consensus on jointly building the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. In 2020, China and Myanmar cooperated closely in the fight against the epidemic, and China actively provided various medical assistance to Myanmar. China has become the main partner of the Democratic League government in solving domestic problems and dealing with external pressures. Leaders of the two countries have further upgraded the positioning of bilateral political relations, and China-Myanmar relations have entered a new stage of building a China-Myanmar community with a shared future.

3.1 Background of National League for Democracy Came To Power

(1) 2015 Myanmar General Election

On November 8, 2015, Myanmar ushered in its second general election after its political transformation in 2010. Aung SAN Suu Kyi and her the National League for Democracy(NLD) won a landslide victory. In the Lok Sabha, the National League for Democracy(NLD) won 255 seats to the Union Solidarity and Development

Party(USDP) Party's 30. In the House of Nationalities, NLD won 135 seats, USDP 11. In the 14 provincial (Burman) and state (minority) assemblies, NLD won 496, compared with USDP's 76. The NLD holds a majority of seats in several provincial and state assemblies. (*Myanmar's National League for Democracy announced its participation in the general election*) In short, the NLD completely dominated the election process, while the USDP suffered a crushing defeat, and the military, ethnic parties and the defeated ruling Solidarity and Development Party have theoretically lost their say in the presidential election. Under Myanmar's current constitution, provincial/state chiefs are appointed by the president. The executive, legislative and even judicial powers will be in the hands of the NLD, which also dominates provincial and state assemblies.

According to the post-election political arrangement, the Federal Parliament convened a new parliament on February 1, 2016; A new president and two vice-presidents were elected on 15 March; On 30 March, the new President, Htin Kyaw, was sworn in as Vice President and minister; The new government took office on April 1. This marks the temporary end of the 54-year history of direct rule by the military or the political party it supports, and the beginning of a new page in Myanmar's politics.

3. 2 Myanmar's Policy Towards China During the Period of National League for Democracy Came To Power

The constitution and program of the National League for Democracy of Myanmar were promulgated at the very beginning of its establishment. From its constitution and

program and its performance after taking power, the National League for Democracy of Myanmar has always adhered to the independent foreign policy of peace and actively developed friendly diplomatic relations with various countries and regions. At the same time, the Party Constitution requires the National League for Democracy of Myanmar to uphold the principle of justice and stand on the side of justice in major international incidents under the guidance of the firm principle of justice in developing its relations with other countries. Secondly, in its cooperation with states and international organizations, the National League for Democracy attaches great importance to the interests of regional countries, especially the mutually beneficial economic cooperation with relevant regional organizations and projects, and attaches great importance to cooperation and relations with international organizations. It firmly and amicably cooperates closely with the World Bank, the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund. Finally, in party diplomacy, emphasis should be placed on humanistic diplomacy and folk diplomacy, so as to promote national cooperation. The National League for Democracy of Myanmar basically observes the principles of the Party Constitution in its foreign relations, develops relations with other countries, political parties and organizations in a peaceful and friendly manner, and attaches great importance to developing relations with China and the CPC.

After the Democratic League came to power, Myanmar improved its cooperation with China and reduced its efforts to balance China. First, soon after the NLD came to power, Aung SAN Suu Kyi tried to ease anti-Chinese investment sentiment in Myanmar

society and boost the confidence of Chinese companies to invest in Myanmar by resuming the suspended Laipyitang copper mine project despite local opposition. In April 2017, Myanmar President Htin Kyaw visited China and officially signed the long-delayed agreement on the China-Myanmar oil pipeline and the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone agreement. Second, senior officials of the Democratic League government support the cooperation initiative proposed by China and hope to upgrade the level of economic cooperation between Myanmar and China. During her first visit to China during her tenure, Aung SAN Suu Kyi expressed her hope to further enhance trade and investment cooperation with China to create jobs, reduce poverty and promote balanced regional development in Myanmar. She also actively supported the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China-India-Myanmar-Bangladesh Economic Corridor, the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone. In September 2018, the two countries signed an inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding on jointly building the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. In December, the two countries established a steering committee for the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative in Myanmar. In January 2020, the two countries agreed to move the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor from conceptual planning to substantive construction. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the two countries have established a "fast track" for necessary personnel exchanges during the pandemic. Thirdly, Aung SAN Suu Kyi and Htin Kyaw repeatedly called on China to play a role in Myanmar's national reconciliation

process during their visits to China and sought China's support for the 21st Century Panglong Conference so as to steadily promote the process of national reconciliation. Finally, although China-Myanmar military cooperation has been disturbed by the armed conflicts in northern Myanmar, China is still one of the main sources of weapons for Myanmar.

3.3 China-Myanmar Relations During the Period of National League for Democracy Came To Power

3.3.1 Economic Relations

The National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung SAN Suu Kyi won the Myanmar general election in 2015 and has been actively implementing the 12-point economic policy to promote economic development since taking power in 2016. In order to better attract foreign investment, the NLD government officially implemented the new Investment Law on April 1, 2017, speeding up Myanmar's opening to the outside world. On the one hand, China-Myanmar economic relations have made great progress. Especially after China proposed the "Belt and Road" cooperation initiative, Myanmar has become a key node in the construction of the "Belt and Road", Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and China-Myanmar "herm-shaped" economic corridor by virtue of its geographical advantages. On the other hand, Myanmar is undergoing political democratic transformation and economic reform, and striving for national reconciliation remains the top priority of the Democratic League government in power. The changes in Myanmar's domestic situation have brought

many uncertainties to China-Myanmar economic cooperation.

(1) China's Investment in Myanmar Has Resumed Growth Trend

Since taking office, the Myanmar Democratic League government has implemented the new Myanmar Investment Law in April 2017 and passed laws promoting foreign investment such as the new Company Law and the Implementation Rules of the Apartment Law in the second half of 2017. However, the economic development policies of the Democratic League government remain unclear. The slow administrative reform, and the outbreak of the Rohingya refugee issue during the period, European and American countries dissatisfied with Myanmar's handling of the Rohingya issue, all said that they would impose sanctions on Myanmar. Under the comprehensive influence of domestic and foreign factors, the total amount of foreign investment attracted by Myanmar Democratic League Government has declined continuously since it came to power. In the fiscal year 2016-2017, Myanmar attracted \$6.649 billion in foreign investment, a decrease of \$2.837 billion, or 42.67%, from \$9.486 billion in the previous fiscal year. In the fiscal year 2017-2018, foreign direct investment in Myanmar reached US \$5.718 billion, a decrease of US \$930 million or 14% compared with the previous fiscal year, marking the second consecutive year of decline in foreign investment since the Democratic League government came to power. From April to August 2018, foreign investment in Myanmar was only 1.4 billion US dollars, lower than the government's expectation of 3 billion US dollars, showing a trend of continuous decline. (MOFCOM, 2023)

Unlike the trend of continuous decline in the amount of foreign investment attracted by Myanmar after the Democratic League came to power, China's investment in Myanmar has reversed the trend of continuous decline and resumed growth. China invested \$483 million in Myanmar in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, according to the Myanmar Investment and Companies Bureau; In the fiscal year 2017-2018, it was US \$1.395 billion, an increase of US \$912 million, and its share of Myanmar's total foreign investment increased from 7.26% to 24.4%. From 1988 to September 30, 2018, Myanmar attracted a total of 77.74 billion US dollars of foreign investment, of which China's total investment in Myanmar was 20.244 billion US dollars, accounting for 26.04 percent of the total. (China, 2018) After the Democratic League came to power, Myanmar realized a smooth transition of political power, with frequent exchanges of visits between leaders of China and Myanmar and deepening political mutual trust. Together with the continued economic and political reform of the Democratic League government, Myanmar's business and investment environment has been improved to some extent, and the confidence of Chinese investors has been boosted, thus maintaining a steady growth of Chinese investment in Myanmar.

(2) Trade Cooperation Resumed Growth

Due to various reasons, since the Democratic League government came to power, the development of China-Myanmar trade has experienced certain fluctuations, from a rapid growth to a gradual slowdown and then recovery of growth. From 2004 to 2014, the trade volume between China and Myanmar maintained steady growth with an

average annual growth rate of 22.9%, of which the growth rate reached 144.9% in 2014. However, from 2015 to 2016, the trade volume between China and Myanmar declined significantly, by 38.8% and 18.6% respectively, and Myanmar returned to the position of trade deficit . After two years of decline, the trade volume between China and Myanmar recovered to 13.54 billion US dollars in 2017, up 10.2% year on year, accounting for 40.65% of Myanmar's total foreign trade volume. In the first eight months of 2018, the trade volume between China and Myanmar reached 10.4 billion US dollars, up by 21.6% year on year, maintaining rapid growth. China and Myanmar share a long land border and a number of trade ports have been opened in the border areas of Musi, Qingshuihe, Leki, Gambeti and Jingdong. Border trade has become an important form of trade cooperation between the two countries. Border trade plays an important role in the trade cooperation between China and Myanmar, and the stable development of border trade has become an important support to promote the trade cooperation between China and Myanmar. Since the Democratic League came to power, China-Myanmar border trade has basically maintained stable development. Only in 2016, affected by the conflicts in northern Myanmar, there was a slight decline, and the rest maintained a growing trend. According to the statistics of Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce, in the fiscal year 2017-2018 (from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018), China-Myanmar border trade reached 6.75395 billion US dollars, up 7.263% year on year, accounting for 79.797% of Myanmar's total border trade. It accounted for 49.88% of the total trade volume between China and Myanmar, among which the trade volume of

Musi Port was 5.82882 billion US dollars, accounting for 86.302% of the total border trade volume between China and Myanmar. From April 1 to August 17, 2018, China-Myanmar border trade totaled 2.538 billion U.S. dollars. China mainly imports rice, sesame, fish, beans and other agricultural products and timber, rubber and other forest products from Myanmar through border trade. The main products exported to Myanmar are machinery and spare parts, electronic products, pesticides, medicines, chemicals, dairy products, etc.

(3) Actively Building Platforms For Economic Cooperation

1. Actively promote the construction of China-Myanmar Border Economic cooperation zone. Border economic cooperation zones are important platforms for China and neighboring countries to innovate cooperation models and accelerate the opening up and development of border areas. Since taking office, the Democratic League has actively promoted the construction of China-Myanmar border economic cooperation zone. In August 2016, Aung SAN Suu Kyi visited China and reached consensus with China on building a China-Myanmar border economic cooperation zone. On May 16, 2017, China and Myanmar signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Commerce of China and the Ministry of Commerce of Myanmar on the Construction of China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zones, reaching consensus on the construction of three border economic cooperation zones in Gambai Di in Kachin State, Mujie and Qingshuihe areas in Shan State.[21] In July 2018, Myanmar held a consultation meeting on the construction of the China-

Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone to actively promote the development of the zone. At present, the construction of China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone has made positive progress. For example, Myanmar is actively promoting the infrastructure construction of Gambaidi border trade port. 70% of the ground maintenance work has been completed. In the fiscal year 2016-2017, it was 106 million US dollars, and increased to 116 million US dollars in the fiscal year 2017-2018. The border trade volume from April to September 2018 was 84.236 million US dollars.

2. Actively promote the construction of industrial parks. In December 2015, CITIC Consortium won the bid for the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone project in Myanmar, which was the first large-scale project won by a Chinese enterprise after Myanmar's general election. In 2017, China and Myanmar officially signed an exchange of documents on the project development and implementation of the Kyaukpyu deep-water port and industrial Park in the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone. The Kyaukpyu Industrial Park will become an important platform for China-Myanmar economic cooperation in the future. In addition, after the Democratic League came to power, China and Myanmar also actively promoted the construction of several industrial parks. For example, in May 2018, the government of Myanmar's Kachin State signed a memorandum of understanding with Yunnan Tengchong Hengrong Investment and Development Co., Ltd. to cooperate in the construction of Myitkyina Economic Development and Development Industrial Zone, which is the first industrial zone built in Myanmar's Kachin State. The Kachin State government holds 51% shares, while

Chinese companies hold 49% shares. The plan has been approved by the government of the Union of Myanmar.

3.3.2 Political Relations

Since the National League for Democracy Came to power in Myanmar, the two parties and countries have had close interactions in high-level visits, international political cooperation, exchange of experience on political parties and governance, and national reconciliation in Myanmar. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the National League for Democracy of Myanmar, China and Myanmar have enjoyed close political interaction. In 2016, Minister Song Tao of China visited Myanmar, during which he was personally received by Aung SAN Suu Kyi. In addition, Minister Song Tao also had extensive exchanges with high-level officials from all walks of life in Myanmar, held talks with grassroots cadres representatives of major political parties in Myanmar, and signed a memorandum of cooperation between China and Myanmar on people's livelihood in the presence of Minister Song Tao. It has enhanced mutual trust and exchanges and cooperation at all levels, laying a solid foundation for the all-round development of China-Myanmar relations. Shortly after the establishment of the National League for Democracy government of Myanmar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi paid a visit to Myanmar, sending an important political signal of China's friendly foreign policy to the government and demonstrating China's political support to the government and the importance it attaches to developing China-Myanmar relations. (portal, 2013) Not long after that, Aung SAN Suu Kyi led a

government delegation of Myanmar's National League for Democracy to visit China. This visit was her first stop outside ASEAN countries, demonstrating the importance of friendly relations with China. In addition, former Myanmar President Htin Kyaw, Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Defense Forces Min Aung Hlaing and other senior officials have visited China many times and met with Chinese leaders.

Internationally, China understands and supports the measures and efforts taken by the National League for Democracy government of Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya issue, supports the 21st Century Panglong Conference convened by the National League for Democracy government of Myanmar to achieve national reconciliation, stands for peaceful settlement of the conflict in northern Myanmar, and embodies the independent foreign policy of a peaceful political party. It also aims to eliminate the threat of conflicts in Myanmar to the lives and property of Chinese border residents and to China's national security. In 2017, China and Myanmar signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Belt and Road Cooperation, marking the beginning of China-Myanmar cooperation on the Belt and Road. Later, in order to better align with China's "Belt and Road" initiative, Myanmar's National League for Democracy government set up the "Belt and Road Implementation Committee" with Aung SAN Suu Kyi as the core under the personal promotion of State Counsellor Aung SAN Suu Kyi, which accelerated the speed of China-Myanmar joint construction of the "Belt and Road". The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor is one of the important corridors of the "Belt and Road" southbound corridor and a strategic passage connecting southwest China and the

Indian Ocean. It is another important initiative of China-Myanmar economic cooperation proposed by Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his invited visit to Myanmar in 2017. The corridor aims to build a road from Yangon New City and Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone in Rakhine State to the spring city of Kunming in the north. The "Man" shaped economic corridor runs through north and south Myanmar and connects southwest China with the Indian Ocean region. Border ports are an important gateway and carrier of China's opening to the outside world. China is Myanmar's largest trading partner and the most important source of investment. Most of the trade between southwest China, represented by Yunnan Province, and Myanmar is carried out through border ports, accounting for a large proportion of the total trade volume between China and Myanmar. In 2017, China and Myanmar signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Building a Border Economic Cooperation Zone in Beijing, which further promoted the development of border trade between the two countries.

In 2018, Premier Li Keqiang met with Aung SAN Suu Kyi when he attended a series of leaders' meetings on East Asia cooperation in Singapore. In April 2019, Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Defense Forces Min Aung Hlaing visited China; According to data released by China's Ministry of Commerce, the bilateral trade volume between China and Myanmar maintained double-digit growth from 2017 to 2019. On the military front, high-level exchanges of visits and close cooperation have produced remarkable results. General Min Aung Hlaing visited China three times between 2016 and 2019. In 2019, Myanmar sent warships to Qingdao to participate in

China's maritime parade. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, China donated batches of medical supplies and sent medical teams to Myanmar to help the country fight against COVID-19. At the same time, Myanmar has also provided assistance to China to the best of its ability.

3.3.3 Cultural Exchange

Since the Democratic League government came to power in March 2016, China and Myanmar have repeatedly pledged to actively promote people-to-people exchanges. On August 19, 2016, when meeting with Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung SAN Suu Kyi at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, the Chinese President said that China is willing to expand exchanges with Myanmar in culture, media, Buddhism and other humanities fields to further consolidate popular support for China-Myanmar friendship. Aung SAN Suu Kyi thanked China for its assistance in health and education in Myanmar.

The establishment of cultural centers in each other's countries is one of the important platforms for people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. In early April 2014, Myanmar Vice President U Nyan Thun signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of China and Myanmar on Establishing Cultural Centers in each Other and the Agreement between the Governments of China and Myanmar on Promoting Exchanges and Cooperation in the Field of Cultural Heritage in Beijing. (China, 2015) On September 4, 2015, during the visit of President U Thein Sein of Myanmar, Minister of Culture Luo Shugang of China and Minister of Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin of Myanmar, on behalf of their respective

governments, signed the Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on Establishing Cultural Centers in each Other's countries. On November 19, 2017, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Myanmar's Minister of Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Ngkor jointly inaugurated the Yangon China Cultural Center in Naypyitaw, capital of Myanmar, witnessed by Myanmar's State Counsellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Aung SAN Suu Kyi. The construction of cultural centers is an important way to improve the mechanism of cultural exchange. The continuous promotion of the construction and development of cultural centers in both countries reflects the establishment and improvement of the exchange mechanism between the two governments. At the same time, the construction of the cultural center provides a space and platform for the development of people-to-people exchanges between China and Myanmar, promotes mutual understanding between the two peoples, promotes cooperation and exchanges between the two countries and consolidates China-Myanmar friendship.

Since the Democratic League came to power, the fields of cultural and artistic exchanges between China and Myanmar have been expanding with remarkable achievements. For example, in February 2018, the first Mandalay Spring Festival Gala was held by various overseas Chinese groups in Mandalay, Myanmar. Thousands of people from all walks of life in Mandalay and local people participated in the event, including Mandalay Chief Executive U Zaw Myung Maung, ministers of the provincial government and their wives. The event was widely welcomed and well received by the

local people in Mandalay. In addition to various art performances, bilateral exchanges have expanded to areas rarely involved in the past. For example, in July 2016, the Chinese Embassy in Myanmar and the Beijing Academy of Painting jointly planned the "Chinese and Myanmar Painters Joint Sketching" activity, in which well-known painters from China and Myanmar formed a joint sketching group to carry out sketching activities in Myanmar and other parts of China. The creations will also be exhibited in China and Myanmar. (1) In August 2016, Yangon University of Foreign Studies of Myanmar held the Chinese Culture Week and China-Myanmar Youth Culture Exchange Festival. More than 300 Chinese and Myanmar teachers and students participated in the activity. (Myanmar, 2016) Through performances, cultural exhibitions and games with Chinese cultural characteristics, the understanding of Chinese culture of Myanmar young students was deepened, and the friendship between Chinese and Myanmar students was also enhanced. In January 2018, Laibin City, Guangxi Province, held the photo exhibition "Brahma Flower · Myanmar Customs and Scenery by Chinese Artists". The photo exhibition, co-led by the foreign ministries and the culture ministries of China and Myanmar, was the first cultural exchange project between China and Myanmar in 2018.

Chapter 4: China-Myanmar Relations After Myanmar Coup D'état (2021-Present)

In February 2021, the Myanmar military detained President U Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung SAN Suu Kyi and other senior officials on the grounds of unfair election results, and declared a one-year state of emergency. Since the military returned

to power on February 1, 2021, Myanmar's democratic transition has experienced twists and turns and encountered difficulties in domestic and foreign affairs. Coupled with the outbreak of COVID-19, Myanmar is in the most difficult period in nearly 10 years. China-myanmar relations are once again being tested.

4.1 The Background to Myanmar Coup D'état

(1) 2020 Myanmar General Election

In March 2020, the National League for Democracy proposed amendments to the Constitution, which targets constitutional guarantees for the military and aims to remain a major political player. Given the military's veto power in parliament, the attempt was doomed from the start. However, the National League for Democracy used the largely symbolic move to signal further reforms ahead of the elections. On 8 November 2020, Myanmar held its sixth election under the 2008 constitution, the third general election since the political transition and the first conducted by an elected government, with the NLD once again winning a landslide victory. According to final election results released by Myanmar's Union Election Commission on November 15, the NLD won 396 of the 476 elected federal seats, six more than in 2015, or 83.2 percent of the total elected federal seats. The USDP won only 33 federal seats (Lok Sabha 26, House of Nationalities 7). Other Burman political parties were wiped out, leaving them without seats in the federal parliament. Eleven ethnic parties won 47 federal seats. All in all, the election was a resounding victory for the National League for Democracy.

(2) 2021 Myanmar Coup D'état

After the 2020 election, political parties such as the USDP continued to complain about the results of the November 2020 election, supported by other political parties and the military. The USDP has made the most complaints since the results were announced, claiming to have found more than 1m abnormal voter lists. The movement of the USDP was supported by other political parties, among which the chairman of the People's Party publicly called on the Election Commission to seriously investigate and deal with the problems in the election. At the same time, the People's Defence Force conducted independent surveys of voter lists in some constituencies and published the results. The military said 17 townships had varying degrees of problems with voter lists, with the most serious having more than 50,000 problematic ballots. The military's move has been criticized by the top echelons of the party for misleading the public about the integrity of the election results. The Federal Election Commission pointed out that the military's investigation was not based on the final list, and called on parties and organizations not to issue investigation reports affecting the electoral process or statements disaccepting the results until complaints had been reviewed. The party has also filed complaints with the Union Election Commission over the results in 17 constituencies, including complaints that USDP chairman U Thant Thay made racist and religious extremist remarks during the campaign. (Tharoor, 2022)

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military detained State Counsellor Aung SAN Suu Kyi, President Win Myint and relevant senior officials of the NLD and declared a state of emergency, claiming that there were unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud

in the November 2020 elections and that errors in the voter list would be identified after the re-formation of the union election committee. For months, the military disputed the results of the election, saying without evidence that voter fraud was widespread. The National Election Commission dismissed the military's allegations for lack of evidence. But the military continued to press its case, calling on the National League for Democracy to delay the seating of the new parliament until the election results can be reviewed. In the end, talks with National League for Democracy leaders broke down after refusing to meet the army's delayed demands, setting the stage for a head-on confrontation.

4.2 Myanmar's Policy Towards China After Myanmar Coup D'état

Myanmar's policy toward China after the coup will be determined by the geopolitical competition between China and the United States and the strategic preferences of Myanmar's leaders. China and Myanmar will compete in Southeast Asia on infrastructure, regional economic cooperation mechanisms, economic aid, and building alliances and partnerships. The two countries will also play games in the South China Sea over freedom of navigation, international rules and resource extraction, but the risk of military conflict is reduced. In addition, after the "coup", the US signed an executive order imposing sanctions on Myanmar's senior military officers, their relatives and enterprises, and freezing more than \$1 billion of Myanmar's assets in the US. Under the dual pressure of the "coup" and the Rohingya issue, the United States will increase economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure on Myanmar, and Myanmar

will face increasing pressure from the United States.

China is the major power the junta can rely on, and the appointment of a new foreign minister, Wunna Maung Lwin, also shows Myanmar moving closer to China. After the "coup" happened, the United States pressured and imposed sanctions on the Myanmar military government, requiring the military to "return the government to the people". Meanwhile, "anti-coup" protests kept cropping up in Myanmar. Myanmar is Mired in internal troubles and foreign invasions, and the independence of the military government is threatened. The de facto head of the National Governing Council, commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing, is seen as a hardliner and conservative who refuses to compromise on political and security matters. For example, he refused to release Aung SAN Suu Kyi, Win Myint and other NLD leaders, refused to hand over power to the NLD, and cracked down on domestic protesters. But this does not mean a return to the offensive strategic preferences of the 1988 junta. Instead, Myanmar will continue its conciliatory strategic preference. The reason is that security threats in Myanmar have declined, while the need for economic gains has increased. First, due to various domestic problems in the US and the temporary ceasefire of the Myanmar army in ethnic minority areas during the epidemic, large-scale military conflicts have been reduced and popular protests have gradually subsided. Myanmar is not facing any immediate security threat. Second, Min Aung Hlaing has formed a national management council to appoint experienced state chiefs and ministers from central government departments to approve new investment projects and boost the economy. In a televised

speech less than a week after the coup, Min Aung Hlaing said Myanmar would continue its current political, economic, diplomatic and epidemic prevention and control policies and would continue to maintain close cooperation with the international community. Then he told his first foreign affairs Council meeting on February 18th that Myanmar would not turn inward. On April 24th he went to Jakarta to attend a special ASEAN summit on Myanmar, and did not reject ASEAN's proposal. He also met with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Myanmar on the sidelines of the meeting. It can be seen that Min Aung Hlaing hopes to gain outside political support through diplomatic contacts to relieve pressure on the military and enhance the legitimacy of the junta, while attracting foreign investment to develop the economy and consolidate the junta rule.

This shows that Myanmar's military government will actively develop diplomatic relations with neighboring countries such as ASEAN, China, India and Russia. In addition, after the "coup", some emotional comments against China and China-Myanmar cooperation projects appeared on social media in Myanmar, and there were even vicious incidents of beating, smashing, looting and burning of Chinese-funded enterprises in Myanmar. In addition, under the influence of the Myitone hydropower Station incident, the Myanmar people still have "implicit bias against Chinese investment", so the economic and trade cooperation between China and Myanmar will still encounter certain public resistance. Especially in ethnic minority areas, Chinese investment in resources could exacerbate ethnic conflicts. Finally, with the rising

demand for foreign debt due to the post-epidemic economic development, the concern that China's loans may lead to a "debt trap" will also persist in Myanmar in the future. All these will become negative factors for Myanmar military government to develop Myanmar-China relations and affect the stable development of Myanmar-China relations.

Part 5: Evaluation and Prospect of China-Myanmar Relations After Myanmar's Democratic Transformation

The good-neighborly, friendly and cooperative relations between China and Myanmar have gone through changes in the international situation, but the foundation for further development of bilateral relations remains unchanged. China remains committed to an independent foreign policy of peace, hopes that Myanmar will maintain stability and attaches greater importance to Myanmar's geostrategic location. And with Western sanctions still in place, Myanmar still needs China's support. But on the other hand, there are still many uncertain factors affecting the development of China-Myanmar relations, some of which may even hinder the development of China-Myanmar relations.

1. China-myanmar good-neighborly, friendly and cooperative relations will continue to develop in the short term. On the one hand, Western countries will not lift sanctions against Myanmar in the short term, and the possibility of the United States significantly adjusting its policy toward Myanmar is not very high. It is also because true democracy in Myanmar is a longer process. Myanmar will remain "dependent" on

China's support in the international arena, especially at the United Nations, and China is a key factor in Myanmar's ability to resist Western sanctions if the West changes little or nothing from its existing position. This determines that Myanmar will choose a policy in favor of China, and there will be no reverse change in China-Myanmar relations in the short term."

2. China is still the country with the greatest influence on Myanmar. The two countries enjoy profound traditional friendship and a solid foundation for their relations. China has always been an important neighbor supporting Myanmar's economic and social development. China maintains good relations with Myanmar's ruling party and military, with frequent high-level visits and mature political mutual trust. Since Myanmar's political transformation, China has been supporting Myanmar in developing its economy and improving people's livelihood, adhering to the principle of non-interference in its internal affairs, and encouraging Myanmar to choose and follow a democratic path suited to its own development and gradually realize domestic political and national reconciliation. Even if there is a coup, the possibility of a serious setback in China-Myanmar relations is relatively small. Factors such as Myanmar's tradition of neutrality, its geopolitical environment and its political and economic "dependence" on China make it impossible for Myanmar to adopt policies hostile to China. Myanmar's interests are better served by a balanced diplomacy among the great powers, as it has always done in the past and will probably continue to do in the future.

3. The new development trend of the relations between the two parties and the two

countries after the political change in Myanmar. The political history of Myanmar since its independence shows that the military is an important participant and dominant player in Myanmar's political life, and has had a significant influence on the direction of Myanmar's political development, such as the road of Burmese Way to Socialism, the market economy reform after the end of the Cold War, and the democratic transformation of Myanmar since 2011. The basis for the participation of the contemporary Myanmar military in politics is the 2008 constitution. "2021 Myanmar coup d'état " is the fourth time that the Myanmar military took over the state power and detained Aung SAN Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, etc. Myanmar returned to the period of the military government, and the National League for Democracy of Myanmar lost its ruling position and resumed the historical old road of confrontation with the military government. In response, the Chinese government said that China is a friendly neighbor of Myanmar and hopes that all parties in Myanmar can properly handle differences under the constitutional and legal framework and maintain political and social stability. In September 2021, at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC), four Myanmar political parties, including the National League for Democracy and the Union Solidarity and Development Party(USDP), participated in the Dialogue between the Communist Party of China and Southeast Asian and South Asian Countries Political Parties with the theme of "Strengthening Political Party Cooperation and Seeking Common Economic Development" through an online meeting on September 9. Two years have passed since the political changes in Myanmar. From the perspective

of the development of China-Myanmar relations, the political changes in Myanmar have not affected the friendly relations between the two countries and the implementation of the "China-Myanmar Economic Corridor" and the "Belt and Road" Initiative. It is believed that in the future, the Communist Party of China and the National League for Democracy of Myanmar as well as the relations between China and Myanmar will maintain a good situation of friendly exchanges, peaceful coexistence and common development.

Conclusion:

General elections were held in 2010, marking an important step on the road to democracy after more than half a century of military rule. Myanmar's political development has entered a new era. After the democratically elected government came to power, it carried out political, economic and social reforms in Myanmar, conducted peace talks with ethnic minorities, promoted the reconciliation of its domestic democratic issues, and began to actively integrate into the international community. Myanmar's democratic reforms have been welcomed by the international community, and many major powers have lifted the isolation policy imposed on Myanmar.

Before the general elections, Myanmar had maintained close relations with China. After the election, Myanmar's government actively developed diplomatic relations with Western developed countries, which added more possibilities for Myanmar's diplomatic choices. The improved relations between Myanmar and Western countries have objectively posed challenges to China-Myanmar relations, and Myanmar has become a

new battlefield for major powers to engage in diplomatic competition.

China should take a positive attitude towards other countries' influence on China-Myanmar relations, maintain its own power presence in Myanmar, consolidate and promote the stable development of bilateral relations, and enhance China's positive influence in Southeast Asia. The development of China-Myanmar relations has encountered some problems. For example, Myanmar's internal ethnic and social contradictions are complex and intertwined, and its political and foreign policy instability, as well as the United States, Japan, India and other extraterritorial factors have interfered with China-Myanmar relations. However, given the deep traditional pauk phaw friendship between the two countries, the friendly and cooperative relationship between the two countries will not be broken, and in the long run, Myanmar's opening to the outside world and democratization process will require China's participation. These issues and factors will not fundamentally shake the solid foundation of China-Myanmar cooperation. The two countries will deepen their relations under the Belt and Road Initiative and add color to the long-term development of China-Myanmar relations.

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