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## Myanmar on the One-Belt One-Road

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### Abstract

“One-Belt One-Road” project is a global project which can maintain the existence of member countries, economic and social development and reduce the international security crisis under the condition of anarchy in the era of globalization. More accurately, it is China's global economic development strategy, and there will be more than 100 member states. Each member country has its own characteristics, and there are various important factors of OBOR. Among them, the national position is the most important one. Because of special geographical conditions, Myanmar has become one of the most important members of OBOR. China- Myanmar relations have been keeping close ties with each other “Pauk-Phaw” relations and have built a lot of cooperation projects. Nowadays, due to the One Belt One Road initiative, what kinds of benefits can get for Myanmar and alternatively what can get for the One Belt One Road are really intriguing questions.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Anarchy, One-Belt One-Road, Pauk-Phaw Relations

### *I. Overview of Sino-Burmese Relations*

Myanmar has experienced the protection of China in history, Myanmar has established diplomatic relations with China since 1950, but at that time, the Sino-Burmese relationship is general. Under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping's "Five Principles of Peaceful coexistence," in 1954, China and Burma established good-neighborly relations. After the settlement of the border problem in 1960, Sino- Burmese began to establish the cordial "Pauk-Phaw" relations (Burmese language "Pauk-Phaw" means the meaning of relatives or brothers, in history, the Burmese people called the Chinese "siblings" as "brothers"). In 1967, after the anti-China incident in Burma, it broke the "Pauk-Phaw" relationship, but it was not that long. At that time, Myanmar had to face big domestic political issues, economic problems, security crisis and so on. In 1971, the friendship between China and Myanmar was restored to the "Pauk- Phaw" relationship under the efforts of the leaders of the two countries. After the leadership of the military government in 1988, the general election was held in 1990, but the result of the election was not achieved. Democratic leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won an overwhelming victory, causing western countries to exert pressure on the country. When the junta was in power, that government faced with Western isolation and sanctions. On the other hand, Burma's foreign policy had to promote good relations with its neighbors. Myanmar sought to establish greater trade links with its neighbors, increase cross-border trade, purchase military equipment and try to stop re-signing agreements with ethnic rebel groups in its borders. After the Tiananmen massacre in 1990, most countries in the world avoided it, and the relationship with the United States deteriorated drastically. When China is recovering, it also establishes good-neighborly and friendly relations with its neighboring countries. Thus, in 1990, Sino- Burmese relations gradually became closer to the

"good neighbor" relationship. During the military government, Burma's political, economic and security dependence on China was very high. Weak countries have a high degree of dependence on a superpower. Meanwhile, the openness of small and weak countries is relatively high. During the 2010 political reform in Myanmar, Myanmar government established a normalization of relations with the West, and it helped democratization of Burma. In fact, Myanmar's Democratic line just opened the door, to go a long way to face a lot of tests, thus Myanmar needs the support of all countries. The normalization of the West has a great effect on the democratization and human rights of political reform in Myanmar, but Myanmar's new government also faces the issue of national reconciliation, economic strengthening, terrorist organizations and so on, these problems can not only rely on friends from afar, the need for immediate help, as the saying goes, "Far away relatives are not as close neighbors." Similarly, Myanmar can learn the good things of neighboring countries from afar. And in most of the problems, Myanmar needs to cooperate with neighboring countries. Since 2010, although Myanmar has gone through a democratic route and resumed normal relations with the West, it has not divided its relations with its neighboring states. In the case of any party in the two countries to take the stage and use any policy, China-Burma relations will continue to go on, and there is no reason to retreat.

## ***II. The Starting Point of One- belt One- road***

21<sup>st</sup> Century is the age of globalization, and the world is in anarchy. Kenneth Waltz emphasized that under the anarchic condition, the first consideration of a country is survival. He believes that in such a system, the purpose of the state is not to gain or maintain power but to ensure survival and that the balance of power was conducive to reducing the risk of war. For the sake of the existence of the country, Robert Gilpin believes that the international economic factors should be taken into account, especially in the era of globalization, the international economic factors are increasingly dominant. In the area of international security, he stressed that only the improvement of the overall strength, including the national economic strength, could be better secured. In the state of anarchy, the members of the international community have a high degree of distrust, and through the establishment of an international system and the establishment of an international organization, the understanding among members can be enhanced, and communication and cooperation among members can be promoted. The goal of more than 100 member countries is to create a favorable environment for the overall development of each country and to reduce the international economic crisis and the international security crisis.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has announced some initiatives to promote China's international presence and establish closer ties with more countries. "One Belt One Road" is the main initiative and will be one of the most extensive globalized programs. This represents not only the renewal, stronger and better coordination of China's overseas expansion, but also in terms of domestic investment activities, almost every province in China has its own shares. In September 7, 2013, President Xi Jinping made a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan: "In order to make the economic ties of the Eurasian countries closer, mutual cooperation is , and the development of space is wider, we can build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" with an innovative cooperative model, the Silk Road Economic Belt, which is a great cause for the people of all countries along the route." (Xi Jinping: 2013) In his speech to the Indonesian parliament on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013, President Xi Jinping said that: "The Southeast Asian region has been an important hub of the sea Silk Road since ancient times, and China is willing to strengthen maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries and use the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund set up by the Chinese government to develop a good marine partnership, Jointly build the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road"." (Xi Jinping: 2013) Two years later, an important milestone has been achieved in the "One- belt One- road" program and various projects in different countries have been started. These include the acquisition of European ports, construction of new Eastern European Railways, construction of highways, natural gas pipelines and so on. The initiative of the "One- belt One- road" will have an impact on about more than 60 countries.

The Silk Road, which has more than 4000 years old, has restarted "One- belt One- road" strategy. The "One- belt One- road" strategy includes "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "Maritime Silk Road." The "Silk Road Economic Belt" has three routes: the first is the "Southwestern Silk Road", after leaving Yunnan Province, Southwest

China, through Myanmar, Bangladesh, India and other countries, and finally to the India Ocean; the second is the "Grassland Silk Road", from the northwest China Xinjiang Autonomous Region depart, through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and other countries, finally to the Baltic Sea coast; the third is the "Central Asia Green State Silk Road", after leaving western China and North West Tibet and Xinjiang Province, through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Iraq, and finally reached the Persian Gulf Coast. The "maritime Silk Road" has two routes: the first is from China's coastal ports across the South China Sea to the India Ocean, and the second is from China's coastal ports across the South China Sea to the South Pacific Ocean. Among them, the main significance of the Southwest Silk Road is the connection between land and sea, with greater permeability. On the "Southwest Silk Road," the strategic location of land and sea links refers to Myanmar.

### ***III. The Importance of Myanmar's Status Under the OBOR Strategy***

Myanmar is one of the most important partners on the OBOR. The first reason is Myanmar's geographical location, and the second reason is Myanmar's energy resources. From the geographical location, Myanmar is located at the southern end of the Indochina peninsula. It has an important strategic position, flashing in the India Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. On the one hand, it is the doorway of China's westward policy, on the other hand, the door of the East entry policy of India. For China, Burma is the gateway to the Bay of Bengal and the India Ocean. The geographical location of Myanmar is very important for China's "one- belt one- road" project. It will connect to India from southwest Yunnan through Myanmar and will become the key part of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" on land. According to Myanmar's position, China also envisages a "maritime Silk Road," from Yunnan, the distance between Myanmar and the India Ocean is much shorter than that through the Malacca Strait. As a result, many projects related to the OBOR have been carried out in Myanmar, for example: building a deep-sea port in the Bay of Bengal, and construction of gas pipelines and oil pipelines from Kyaukpyu, Myanmar to Yunnan, China. In such a geographical environment, Myanmar wants to create and maintain a win-win situation for every partner. For Myanmar, hope to obtain economic benefits and investment from China's OBOR project to safeguard national interests.

### ***IV. The Dream of "OBOR" Initiative to Myanmar***

In 2017, Xi Jinping emphasized at the nineteen Congress: "the dream of Chinese people and people from all over the world is closely linked. Without a peaceful international environment and a stable international order, it is impossible to come true China's dream". He simply referred to the "new round" of "the Silk Road," that is, "One-belt One- road advocates creating an enabling environment for the country's development." The OBOR initiative aims to promote connectivity between Asia, Europe, Africa and its neighboring countries, to establish strengthen partnerships between countries along the OBOR, to establish all dimensions, multi-level and composite connectivity networks, and to achieve the independence, balance and continuous development of these countries.

OBOR is designed to create the world's largest economic cooperation corridor, has five main objectives: policy coordination, connectivity on facilities, liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment, financial integration and people-to-people bonds. The cooperation on the OBOR is more important than promoting the development of the six economic corridors: China- Mongolia- Russia, Central Asia- Western Asia, India- China, China- Pakistan, Bangladesh- China- India- Myanmar. These corridors will become a venue for energy and industrial clusters and will be built through railways, highways, waterways, aviation, pipelines and information superhighways. The basic goal of the "OBOR" is to build the global energy net. The energy sector and geopolitical importance play a vital role in Burma's economic development.

China and Myanmar governments have identified as the "Bangladesh, China, India and Burma economic corridor." China is facing increasing import dependence, and energy demand is expected to keep pace with economic growth. At present, China's oil imports are now being transported from the Middle East and Africa, relying on the Straits of Malacca. Natural gas and oil are the biggest components of Burma's exports. Therefore, under the "OBOR" project, the southwest regions: Yunnan province, Guangxi province can get Myanmar's oil

and gas with more efficient and reasonable price. In addition, there are other reasons for China's construction of Sino- Burmese oil pipeline: (1) this pipeline will allow China's crude oil imports to avoid the Malacca Straits; (2) the oil pipeline from Kyaukphyu to Kunming is 1200 kilometers, which is shorter than that of Malacca strait to Guangzhou; (3) the financial pipeline construction will limit the impact of other countries on Myanmar and Myanmar will become a strategic buffer zone for China; (4) the history, current situation and future prospects of the Sino-Burmese relations ensures the safety of the pipeline; and (5) the construction of the pipeline will be cheaper than other alternatives, because there is a 400 kilometer long railway operation and a railway is planned to be built to connect the remaining 500 km between Sittwe and Kunming. (Bo Kong: 2010) OBOR will be linked to land and sea in Burma. The road is to find the shortest route of export for the southern part of China. With this outlet, China can avoid some of the dangers of current energy and trade routes, and can also obtain new energy channels and trade channels, and also reduce the cost and time of transportation. For example, Southwest China's goods are transported from the Kunming- Kyaukpyu railway to the Kyaukpyu port, and then transported to the South Asia, Africa, and Europe markets. It can save 2 to 7 days, and the cost can be reduced. (Professor Li Chen Yang, 2016.) "OBOR" through Myanmar, the Chinese people want to be able to provide a reasonable price of goods, more efficient and lower costs than the current to export of Chinese products to the "OBOR" market and other related countries. Along the way, a large number of construction materials, capital equipment, skilled labor and technical expertise will be required and can be sold to countries and regions related to the area, and skilled labor and technical experts are trained for the residents of the region. In this way, OBOR can provide the benefits not only in political sectors but also in economical sections for China.

#### ***V. Myanmar's Dream to the "One- Belt One- Road" Initiative***

Myanmar has not officially started the "OBOR" initiative, but Myanmar national leaders have these ideas on OBOR initiative: on 17<sup>th</sup> of November, 2015, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in an interview with reporters from the Xinhua news agency said that she appreciates China's "OBOR" initiative and hopes that the "OBOR" initiative can achieve results that are favorable to all. During Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to China on August 20, 2016, Myanmar reiterated its position to welcome China's "OBOR" initiative. On September 12, 2016, vice president U Myint Swe in Kunming said that Myanmar was willing to support and actively participate in the construction of the "OBOR," to promote the construction of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor. On April 7, 2017, U Htin Kyaw, the former President of Myanmar, in Shaanxi said that Myanmar hopes to strengthen economic and trade cooperation with Shaanxi, especially in the industrial, agricultural, tourism, trade and other fields of training cooperation to enhance the level of vocational education in Myanmar. At present, more and more countries are participating in the construction of "OBOR," and Myanmar is also studying how to join. On May 15, 2017, when the leaders' roundtable was held at the Beijing Conference Centre, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said: " The projects under the Initiative would be most effective if they are designed to re-enforce or complement on-going and future projects of respective nations and regional organizations." To quote again, "She added that each partner country has its own characteristics and the best multi-national initiatives are those aligned well with national plans." Furthermore "She emphasized the need to ensure that business activities are carried out in a socially and environmentally responsible manner." She also mentioned that "The creation of employment opportunities for local peoples is also an important factor." (Kyaw Win, 2017) During her visit to China, Republic of the Union of Myanmar and People's Republic of China signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the two governments on the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road framework.

On the "OBOR" initiative, Burma's economists held a forum in August 2017 to "OBOR: positive or negative for Myanmar?" (Khine Kyaw: 2017) In this forum, U Aye Lwin, a member of the Myanmar Investment Commission and the ruling National League for Democracy party's Central Economic Committee, said: Myanmar needed to know its own strengths and weaknesses to ensure that it will benefit from China's new Silk Road strategy. He emphasized the importance of policy coordination. Dr. Khin Maung Nyo, founder and vice president of the Myanmar Economics Association, said that "China is the top investor in Myanmar, and we owe a lot to that country. We still have a large sum of foreign debt to settle, and approximately 44 per cent of that comes from China. We need to take that into serious consideration. In the past, we used to look cautiously at

China. But I have noticed that China has shown respect towards the sovereignty of other nations to a degree more than ever before.” “Myanmar could not avoid OBOR, as it played a vital role in China’s Silk Road and maritime trade expansion plans,” said U Zaw Phay Win, an economic adviser to the Union Parliament. “In every strategy, good and bad things can happen at the same time, but Myanmar must work to ensure that positive results are produced,” he said.

Myanmar's natural resource situation has created economic opportunities for Myanmar. In particular, energy enrichment is absolutely significant for Burma. Although Myanmar has such a good condition, economic and social development is still very backward. The reason for the economy's inability to recover is the backwardness of science and technology, the shortage of professionals, insecure land rights, fragile exchange rate regimes, the collapse of income and tax systems, fiscal deficits, and so on. So since the 2011 government Reform, Myanmar has been looking for the most suitable investor in the country, hoping to upgrade its infrastructure, develop weak industries and, of course, create plenty of jobs.

"OBOR" through Myanmar, Myanmar nationals hope to provide reasonably priced goods of good quality. At the same time, exports of domestic products, mainly Myanmar's voluntary export commodities, to China's markets and other relevant countries, are being exported at higher efficiency and lower costs than they are now. To upgrade Myanmar's economy, fewer employment opportunities are the main problems facing Myanmar government. In terms of job creation, most of the jobs are short-term occupations, for example: setting up roads, railways and establishing deep seaports. Thus, the Myanmar government needs to prepare long-term occupations for rural employment, for example new investments in the manufacturing sector, the promotion of trade, the flow of goods between participating countries and so on. In the manufacturing sector, Myanmar still lagged behind than other ASEAN countries, needs to cooperate with technical investors, mainly to produce exports dominated by Myanmar resources and contribute to member countries of OBOR. According to Myanmar’s geopolitical situation, Myanmar can supply land consignment, sea consignment, and air consignment, so, rural people can provide transportation and delivery services for OBOR passengers. In addition, based on Myanmar’s national geopolitical resources, can attract the tourists from neighboring countries and "OBOR" passengers. In the future, manufacturing export goods, strengthening trade and increasing tour services are reliable means of employment opportunities and also can create export earnings.

#### ***VI. Current Cooperation Between China and Myanmar on the One-Belt One-Road***

China and Burma have been closely related to each other and have established a partnership in history. Some of the cooperation during Burma's long military reign will also continue under the "OBOR" project, for example oil and gas pipeline cooperation and Myit Sone dam. In 2009, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Myanmar Oil and Gas Corporation (MOGE) jointly implemented a long dual oil and gas pipeline agreement extending from the Bay of Bengal in Myanmar to Kunming in China. The pipeline is designed to transport 22 million tons of crude oil annually. The diameter of 813mm and the natural gas pipeline can replace 30.72 million tons of coal per year. Some of the cooperation projects were required under the "OBOR" project but were suspended after the democratization of Myanmar in 2011, for example, the Myit Sone hydropower station, which was officially started in December 2009. The installed capacity of the Myit Sone Hydropower station is 6 million Kilowatts, and the annual average power generation is about 30.8 billion Kilowatts. Firstly, some of the electricity will spend in Myanmar as needed and then others will send to the North and South Power Grid in China. Myanmar will gain 10% of the power, and the rest will be exported to China. The local community opposed the dam site because it locates from the main Sagaing fault line less than 100 kilometers. If the earthquake weakens the dam or causes the reservoir to a landslide, it poses a risk to the residents of the basin. If the Myit Sone dam breaks out during the earthquake, it will endanger the lives of thousands of people in Myitkyina, the largest city in Kachin State. (Rachel Harvey: 2011) Therefore, on September 30, 2011, the president of Myanmar, U Thein Sein, announced this in the Myanmar Parliament: "Because our government is elected by the people, is to respect the will of the people. We have a responsibility to deal seriously with issues of public concern. Therefore, during the time of our government, the construction of the dam will be suspended." OBOR also needs to build the railway, and the railway project is one of the cores of the "OBOR" strategy, needs

to use a lot of electricity. If the Myit Sone dam can be started, the railway project of "OBOR" can be successfully implemented in the Myanmar area. Also in 2009, Citic Group (CITIC) signed a separate memorandum with the Myanmar Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development to construct a deep-sea port and rail network in Rakhine State. The railroad will run parallel to the natural gas pipeline, 868 kilometers (539 miles) long. At that time, residents asked for transparency and accountability in every aspect of the special economic zone, so as to raise the living standard of the local residents. However, a civic organization in Kyaukpyu said that the project still lacks transparency. The Ministry of Railways of Myanmar was accused of the complaints from the civic organization, so Kyaukpyu-Kunming railway project was stopped in 2014, and there is no more progress. Today, however, the port transaction has gained new life and consortium led by CITIC Group. Since the elected government became powerful in 2011, the Myanmar government has formulated the special economic zone plan. Among them, the position of the Kyaukpyu special economic zone will be part of the "OBOR" project, and both Burma and China will show interest in the development of the project. Former President U Thein Sein and former union parliamentary speaker U Thura Shwe Mann announced that Kyaukpyu is one of the special economic zones. Legislators also agree that Kyaukpyu is a special economic zone, but requires transparency. On December 29, 2015, the former parliament approved that will operate the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone in the coming term of government. China's investment of about 10 billion dollars has been designated for a deep-sea port in Kyaukpyu, to create a trade real estate and a special economic zone. Special economic zones include deep-sea port terminals, and industrial clusters include steel, petrochemical plants, highways and other infrastructure to supplement industrial belts. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, AIIB, will play a big role in Myanmar. When former president U Htin Kyaw visited China in April 2017, President Xi and President U Htin Kyaw agreed to launch a 770-kilometer oil pipeline from the western part of Burma to the Chinese border. The pipeline can deliver 22 million tons of oil a year, accounting for nearly 6% of China's total imports in 2016. The crude oil transported through this route will be mainly to Kunming and Chongqing, in western China. In return, Myanmar will receive 13.81 million of dollars for road usage fees, and the transit charge for each ton of crude oil imported through the pipeline in the next 30 years is the US \$1.

However, the implementation of these projects may be influenced by a number of factors. The first is the conflict between Myanmar military and northern Myanmar (near to China- Myanmar border) ethnic minorities. This conflict has a great threat to the citizens of the Sino- Burma border, and the border trade between the two countries is also damaged, so the region needs to be peaceful and stable. In addition, Myanmar's investment environment also has some defects, from weak infrastructure to the weak rule of law. The Myanmar government needs to protect investors from the legal side. The second effect is the concern of the people in the region. Under the leadership of the military government, Burma's trade in large-scale investment projects is considered unjustly and corruptly, thus it also has deepened citizens' dissatisfaction with the country. In this case, the new government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi became powerful in 2016, needs foreign investment to prove that it provides growth and dividends for the people. The third effect is environmental protection, "OBOR" is a long-term "Win-win" project that will have a significant impact on the lives of peoples and societies, not only the best interests of the participating countries, but also the social and environmental impacts, as the state counselor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has pointed out. In terms of environmental protection, Myanmar can trust AIIB, and AIIB may have a place on ADB and the World Bank. The last effect is the danger of Rohingya's conflict (in Bengali Language Rohingya means that the people in the Rakhine State of Myanmar), indeed the conflict of terrorist organizations. In the conflict of August 2017, the Government of Myanmar officially announced that the attack had been prepared for a long period of systematic planning with the support and assistance of foreign aid terrorist organizations and terrorist supporters. This conflict has a great impact on the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone, and the other side faces the damage to the "Southwest Silk Road" on the sea and land connection and the economic corridor of BCIM. For the time being, the government of Bangladesh and Myanmar resolved this problem together. If the two governments could not solve the problem, China and India would be very likely to participate in solving the terrorist organization problem.

### VII. Conclusion

OBOR initiative is the invitation of China to all countries of the world to create a favorable environment for the overall development of each country. However, each country in the region has its own characteristics, and there are different views on how best to deal with this opportunity. For Myanmar, there are not only historical reasons, but also because of the reality of economic and trade ties, China is the most viable candidate. For China, there are not only natural resources, but also the same ethnic, cultural of the two nations and the strategic position of Burma, and Burma is an important neighbor partner. Myanmar hopes that the OBOR project will help the transformation of Myanmar's industrial priorities and economic reform. Although there is no clear answer at present, China and Myanmar's energy cooperation and the Kyaukpadaung Special Economic Zone project will realize Sino- Myanmar common dream "OBOR." Thus, the two governments also should prepare for the challenges and difficulties that can face in the future.

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