

Research on the US Agricultural Technology Assistance Policy to Myanmar under the Southeast Asian Cold War Perspective (1948-1962)

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Abstract: The Second World War (1939-1945) was a war of unprecedented scale, which had a profound impact on the world. After the war, the world entered the Cold War period, forming a confrontation between the two camps headed by the United States and the Soviet Union. Among them, the US aid policy to Myanmar deserves our attention. Its different support policies for Myanmar in different time periods were largely influenced by the relationship between Myanmar and the Soviet Union, and also considered the relationship with various countries in Southeast Asia. This article takes 1948-1962 as the time clue to introduce the US aid policy to Myanmar in each period, and unfolds the narrative with the US global and Southeast Asian strategies and the goals and means to achieve in this stage as the main line.

Keywords: United States, Myanmar, Cold War, Agricultural Technology Assistance.

1. Introduction

Under the shadow of the Cold War, Southeast Asia has become the focus of confrontation between the two camps of the East and the West. Myanmar, an ancient country located in the Indochina Peninsula, has become a key link in the US strategic considerations due to its unique geographical location and rich natural resources. From 1948 to 1962, the United States implemented a series of agricultural technical assistance policies for Myanmar, which not only affected Myanmar's agricultural development, but also profoundly reflected the United States' strategic considerations in the region during the Cold War.

On February 28, 1947, the Truman administration signed the "US-Myanmar Surplus Property Agreement" with the Burmese Provisional Government. According to the agreement, the Truman administration was to use all the \$5 million in funds obtained from the resale of strategic materials such as jeeps and military trucks that the United States had left in Burma during the war for economic construction in Burma and to help the Burmese Provisional Government train technical personnel. The United States' economic diplomacy policy towards Burma in the early post-war period enhanced the United States' international influence in Burma, reflecting that the United States had stepped out of the "isolationist diplomatic tradition" after the war and began to pay more attention to the expansion of the United States' political influence around the world, even at the expense of some economic interests.

2. The U.S. Policy on Agricultural Technical Assistance to Burma from 1948 to 1953

This stage began on January 4, 1948, when Burma separated from the Commonwealth and gained independence, and ended on September 8, 1954, when the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (also known as the Manila Treaty) was signed and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was

established. In order to facilitate the study of this topic and make it fit the specific historical context, we summarize the characteristics of this period as the Cold War pattern in Southeast Asia has not yet appeared.

"Because our country has moral, political, economic and military power, it naturally has the responsibility to lead the international community, and it also has the opportunity to lead the international community. For the sake of its own greatest interests and peace and humanity, our country cannot shrink from this noble responsibility, should not shrink, and in fact has not shrunk." After the war, the United States' ambition to dominate the world expanded rapidly. U.S. President Truman claimed that the whole world should adopt the American system and oppose communism. With the introduction of the Truman Doctrine in the United States, the "Cold War" kicked off. At the same time, the world gradually formed a bipolar pattern centered on the United States and the Soviet Union.

Affected by the war, Western Europe was in ruins, its economy was in decline, and it had lost a lot of land. In addition, the rare natural cold at the end of 1946 led to extreme material shortages and extremely unstable social and political situations. The United States saw an opportunity at this time and facilitated the formation of the Atlantic Alliance. First, the "Marshall European Recovery Plan" was proposed to promote economic recovery and political stability in European countries, especially Britain, France, West Germany and other countries, opening the door for the US dollar to open the Western European market. Then, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was actively established to enhance the overall defense capabilities of Western Europe. At the same time, the Bretton Woods system established the dominant position of the US dollar and promoted the stability and development of the world economy. All these measures serve the US global strategy of hegemony.

The US diplomatic strategy towards Southeast Asia is subordinate to the US global diplomatic strategy and is constrained and guided by the US global diplomatic strategy after the war. Because the United States was still focused on

Western Europe at the time, and China in Asia, the strategic goal for Myanmar was only a relatively general overview - "I hope that Myanmar will have a stable government, facing the United States and the Commonwealth, able to restore domestic order, resist communist pressure, and promote the country's social and economic revival." [1] It also believes that "Britain and the Commonwealth should bear the main responsibility and provide Myanmar with the advice, military and financial assistance it needs for stability. Our policy is to supplement their efforts by providing assistance that the United States may be more capable of providing than these countries when implementing our own Burmese plans." [2]

In 1948, the United States began to implement a policy of agricultural technical assistance to Myanmar. The original intention of this policy was to help Myanmar improve its agricultural production capacity and improve rural economic conditions by providing agricultural technical support and training. At the same time, the United States also hopes to strengthen economic ties with Myanmar and consolidate bilateral relations through agricultural technical assistance. However, before 1950, US aid to Myanmar was fragmented. In addition to limited information and personnel exchange programs, Myanmar did not receive other US aid. 1950-1953 was the period when the United States assisted Britain in providing aid. However, due to the founding of New China in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the United States sent delegations to visit Myanmar one after another out of concern for the expansion of communism. In February 1950, during Jessup's visit, he promised that "any aid will be related to the United States", and the United States determined the necessity and feasibility of aiding Myanmar. [3] The United States imposed military "aid" with the help of economic "aid" and other conditions to influence Myanmar's politics, but Myanmar refused three times and the aid was officially launched in 1950.

3. US Agricultural Technical Assistance Policy to Myanmar from 1954 to 1956

The background of this period was: Stalin died in 1953, and Khrushchev adjusted the aid policy to emerging nation-states in Southeast Asia such as Myanmar. Stimulated by the Soviet Union's active expansion of aid policy, the US policy has undergone tremendous changes and adjustments-from sanctions to aid. By 1956, the United States had provided large-scale aid to Myanmar, and two important documents were signed.

In 1953, rice prices fell and Burmese rice sales were difficult. In April 1954, socialist countries began to sign agreements with Burma to purchase some unsalable rice. The United States felt a crisis and imposed sanctions on Burma, snatching Burmese rice sales in Asia, causing Burma to suffer heavy losses and serious unsalability of rice. During U Nu's visit to the United States in July-August 1955, he was also coldly received. The United States refused to provide technical "assistance" to Burma in exchange for Burmese rice. [4] But in September of the same year, Burma and the United States negotiated in Washington on the issue of providing economic "assistance" to Burma. In the end, a technical service agreement was signed with Burma based on the Colombo Plan to provide it with \$1.1 million in aid. [5][6][7]

In February 1956, after three years of interruption of

relations between the governments of the United States and Burma, the first agreement on giving Burma economic "assistance" was signed, providing a total of \$21.7 million in U.S. surplus products in accordance with U.S. Public Law No. 480. [8] In March, the Burmese government requested military assistance from the United States. In the summer of 1956, the US government suggested that Myanmar accept the loan, and began negotiations to provide the loan in August 1956. [9]

From this process, we can analyze that the US aid officially entered the implementation stage starting in 1956 and lasted until the end of the U Nu government. During this period, in order to maintain its strategic interests in Southeast Asia, the United States strengthened its economic assistance and technical support to the countries in the region. As an "ally" of the United States, Myanmar naturally became the focus of US agricultural technical assistance. In addition, Myanmar is rich in agricultural resources, but its agricultural production methods are relatively backward and its agricultural technology level is low, which provides the United States with a broad space for technical assistance. Its aid policy mainly includes the following aspects

(a) Technical guidance and training: The United States sent agricultural experts and technicians to Myanmar to provide agricultural technical guidance and training to local farmers. These experts not only taught advanced agricultural technology and management methods, but also helped Myanmar establish agricultural research institutions and technology promotion systems.

(b) Material assistance: The United States provided Myanmar with a large amount of agricultural machinery and equipment, seeds, fertilizers and other material assistance to improve Myanmar's agricultural production conditions. The provision of these material assistance provides an important material basis for the development of Myanmar's agriculture.

(c) Financial support: The United States supports Myanmar's agricultural infrastructure construction and agricultural scientific research activities by providing loans and grants. These financial supports provide the necessary financial guarantee for the development of Myanmar's agriculture.

4. US Agricultural Technical Assistance Policy to Myanmar from 1957 to 1962

Starting in 1957, during the reign of the U Nu government, the US aid policy to Myanmar was fully launched. Although there were some short-term sanctions, it was mainly aid in general. Until Ne Win came to power in 1962, Myanmar implemented a closed-door policy and objectively no longer needed aid. The United States stopped providing aid from then on.

In 1957, the International Development Agency signed a \$25 million loan agreement with Myanmar, and the US government also signed an \$18 million loan agreement with Myanmar under the PL480 program. On March 21, 1957, the two countries signed an economic cooperation agreement in Yangon, replacing the agreement signed in 1950, providing "aid" in the form of loans. This loan had no political conditions, but the United States imposed some conditions on Myanmar, such as the use of loans, the increase of officials in the US Embassy, etc.; the Burmese ambassador signed an agreement in Washington on the International Cooperation

Agency to provide Myanmar with two loans through the US Export-Import Bank.[10]

In December of the same year, the US government stated that "Myanmar can obtain up to 10 million US dollars in military aid funds, which can be given in the form of equipment, training and consultants." On May 27, 1958, a new agreement was signed in Yangon on Myanmar's purchase of 18 million US dollars of surplus products from the United States; on the 29th, the Burmese ambassador to the United States, U Win, signed in Washington on the Export-Import Bank providing Myanmar with a loan of 10 million US dollars for the purchase of police equipment. In August 1958, Myanmar, the United States and India signed a tripartite agreement, Myanmar purchased textiles worth 5 million US dollars from India, and the United States paid for it. There were many more aid actions in education, infrastructure construction and other aspects. Until January 1960, the total amount of US "aid" to Myanmar reached 159.11 million US dollars.

However, many subsequent performances proved that the US ruling group's plan and intention to change Myanmar's foreign policy and join its camp failed. During the military rule since Ne Win came to power in 1962, the relationship between the United States and Myanmar deteriorated. Myanmar has long been blocked and sanctioned by Western countries led by the United States and has been isolated from mainstream society.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

From 1948 to 1952, the United States' aid to Myanmar has not been fully launched. The United States' policy and aid plan to Myanmar has evolved from staying out, limited aid, comprehensive aid to reduced aid. Under the different perspectives of Cold War strategy and geopolitics, the United States and Myanmar have unequal definitions and expectations of aid, which has led to the shelving of the US aid plan to Myanmar. In the United States' Cold War perspective, the direct motivation and core goal of aiding Myanmar is to curb the development of communism. Therefore, we can find that since the signing of the "US-Myanmar Surplus Property Agreement" in 1947, all the US aid policies and treaties signed to Myanmar have been based on sacrificing part of its own economic interests. So under what factors did the United States take such an abnormal action? In addition to the Southeast Asian Cold War era background involved in this article, the strategic goals and

cultural characteristics of the United States, the diplomatic concepts of the leaders of the United States and Myanmar, and the promotion of American political parties and related interest groups have all led to the United States' relevant diplomatic measures to a certain extent.

In short, the US aid plan to the new Union of Myanmar can be regarded as a contest around Myanmar under the Southeast Asian Cold War pattern. This contest was initiated by the United States' Asian security policy, but it did not ultimately achieve the United States' expected goals. We can see that it is doomed to be difficult to implement the usual aid model under the Cold War mentality.

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