

[Translation Studies]

The World and the English Translations of Mao Zedong's Poems Since 1949

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Received: January 28, 2026

Accepted: February 27, 2026

Published: June 30, 2026

To cite this article: LI Zhengshuan & YANG Zhijian. (2026). The World and the English Translations of Mao Zedong's Poems Since 1949. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 059–076, DOI: 10. 53789/j. 1653–0465. 2026. 0602. 008

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.53789/j.1653-0465.2026.0602.008>

Abstract: This paper examines the book *The Complete Collection of English Translation of Mao Zedong's Poems since 1949*. This book is a comprehensive anthology devoted to the English translations of Mao Zedong's poetry produced between 1949 and 1976. It assembles fifty-three poems together with every published English version that has hitherto been traced—rather than attempting to cover the entire corpus of seventy-two poems Mao Zedong composed after 1949. The epithet “complete” signals an effort to exhaust all extant English renderings of these works and to arrange them systematically according to chronology, translator, textual recension, and medium. The aim is to present the full ecology of Mao's poetic translations during this period. The fifty-three poems exhibit marked disparities in the number of their English versions: 1. Single-version poems: only one English translation is known. 2. Multiple-version poems: two or more English translations exist, which may be the work of Chinese or foreign translators acting independently or collaboratively. 3. Untranslated poems: despite extensive searching, no English rendering has yet surfaced. These divergences illuminate not only the translators' selective interests and aesthetic preferences but also their political positions, cultural identities, ideological commitments, and the objectives and strategies that inform their practice. Consequently, the book organizes its material around three mutually implicative coordinates—text, translator, and context—thereby furnishing a corpus that invites close comparison. Undoubtedly, the publication of this book reveals the profound meaning and unique value of Mao Zedong's poems since 1949.

Keywords: world background; Mao Zedong's poems; English translation

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1. Introduction

1949 was a pivotal year of New China and a Reshaped World. This book is titled *The Complete Collection of English Translation of Mao Zedong's Poems since 1949*. This paper will first discuss the major Sino-foreign events of 1949 and their impact on China and the world, followed by a brief introduction to the history of English translations of Mao Zedong's poems. Finally, it is important to unveil the significant meaning and unique value of the poems since 1949.

Obviously, 1949 was a milestone year in the course of human history. In this year, a new regime where the people were masters of their own destiny was born on the Mainland China, and a series of major events that reshaped the international environment occurred globally. These events not only profoundly altered China's historical trajectory but also had a far-reaching impact on the post-World War II global order, the balance of international power and the path of human development. Naturally, Mao Zedong's poetry since 1949 was also influenced by major domestic and international events and documented the process of social development.

2. Major Events in China in 1949 and Their Impact on China

The most significant event in China in 1949 was the founding of the People's Republic of China. Revolving around this central event were key occurrences such as the liberation of most of the country by the People's Liberation Army and the convening of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, all of which constituted a historic turning point of earth-shattering change in Chinese history.

2.1 Core Event: Founding of the People's Republic of China

On October 1, 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong solemnly declared on Tiananmen, "The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China is established today." This moment marked the end of China's 109-year history as a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society since the Opium War of 1840, "and opened the door to the comprehensive realization of China's modernization and its entry into socialism, ushering in a new epoch in Chinese history." (Wang 413) The impact of this event on China has been fundamental and decisive, permeating all aspects of politics, economics, society, and culture:

(1) Political Level: Ending "A Century of Humiliation" and Establishing an Independent and Unified People's Government

Since 1840, China had been subjected to aggression from powers including Britain, France, the United States and Japan, and was forced to sign a series of unequal treaties such as the *Treaty of Nanking* (1842), the *Treaty of Shimonoseki* (1895), and the *Boxer Protocol* (1901). National sovereignty was severely trampled, and territory was divided (e. g., Hong Kong and Macau leased, Taiwan occupied by Japan), making China a "semi-colony" contested by imperial powers. Concurrently, internal warlordism and frequent regime changes (neither the Beiyang Government nor the Nationalist government achieved true national unity) left the people oppressed by the "three mountains" which are imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China first achieved the complete and independent sovereignty

of the nation—all unequal treaties were thoroughly abolished, and sovereign rights over customs, concessions, and inland river navigation controlled by foreign powers were reclaimed, ending the humiliating history of weak nations having no say in diplomacy. Secondly, it achieved the basic unification of the national territory—except for Taiwan and a few offshore islands, Mainland China was, for the first time, brought under unified administrative, military, and judicial management by a single central government, ending the fragmentation caused by warlords since the late Qing Dynasty. Even more importantly, it established a new type of regime—the people’s democratic dictatorship. Through the *Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference*, it was clearly stated that “the People’s Republic of China is a New Democratic country, i. e. , a People’s Democratic country, which carries out the people’s democratic dictatorship led by the working class, based on the alliance of workers and peasants, and uniting all democratic classes and the people of all nationalities within the country.” For the first time, “the people being masters of their own destiny” was enshrined as a fundamental national system. The broad masses of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and other laborers transformed from the oppressed to the masters of the country, enjoying fundamental rights such as the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to work, fundamentally altering the political structure of traditional Chinese society, which was characterized by the rule of the minority over the majority.

(2) Economic Level: Destroying the Old Economic System and Laying the Foundation for a Socialist Economy

Before the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese economy exhibited typical “semi-colonial and semi-feudal economic” characteristics: the industrial base was extremely weak. In 1949, industrial output value accounted for only 17% of the total national economic output, and it was mainly light industry and mining, without a complete industrial system. Agriculture had long been under the system of feudal land ownership. Landlords and rich peasants, accounting for less than 10% of the rural population, owned 70%–80% of the land, and peasants suffered from land rent exploitation, leading to low production enthusiasm. The national economy was monopolized by bureaucratic capital, which was represented by the four major families, controlling 90% of the national banking capital and 70% of industrial output and foreign capital, resulting in the hardship of ordinary people’s lives.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, immediate steps were taken to dismantle the old economic system and construct a new economic order. On the one hand, confiscation of bureaucratic capital led to state ownership of enterprises controlling the lifeline of the national economy, transforming them into socialist state-owned enterprises, and rapidly gaining control over the nation’s industrial, financial, and transportation lifelines. On the other hand, the *Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference* clearly stipulated the “implementation of land reform, abolition of the feudal land ownership system of exploitation, and the institution of a land system where the tiller owns the land.” Starting in 1950, land reform was promoted nationwide (already carried out in old liberated areas like Northeast and North China in 1949). By the end of 1952, the feudal land ownership system was thoroughly abolished, and over 300 million landless or land-poor peasants received approximately 700 million mu of land, completely freeing them from land rent exploitation and significantly boosting agricultural production enthusiasm, laying the groundwork for subsequent agricultural collectivization and industrialization. Simultaneously, by stabilizing prices and unifying finance and economy (achieving a balance of national revenue and expenditure in March 1950), hyperinflation left by the



Kuomintang government (prices in Shanghai in 1949 had risen 3.6 trillion times compared to 1937) was rapidly curbed, restoring order to the national economy and creating conditions for the commencement of the “First Five-Year Plan” and socialist industrialization in 1953.

(3) Social Level: Promoting Social Revolution and Reshaping Social Structures and Values

Before the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Chinese society was long plagued by severe class oppression, gender discrimination and backward customs: the personal dependence of landlords on peasants, the constraints of feudal etiquette on women, the partitioning by clan influence, and social ills such as prostitution and opium. Social stratification was rigid, and people at the bottom lacked upward mobility.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, a profound social revolution was propelled by the core principles of “equality” and “liberation”. In terms of class relations, through land reform, the suppression of counterrevolutionaries and other movements, the ruling status of the feudal landlord class and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie was thoroughly destroyed, forming a new social class structure dominated by workers, peasants and intellectuals, eliminating class oppression. In terms of gender equality, the *Marriage Law* was promulgated (May 1950; although implemented in 1950, its legislative basis was laid in 1949), stipulating the “abolition of the feudal marriage system of arranged and forced marriages, male superiority and disregard for the interests of children, and the institution of a new democratic marriage system characterized by freedom of marriage between men and women, monogamy, equal rights between men and women and the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women and children.” It prohibited concubinage and child brides and encouraged women to leave the home to participate in work. The concept of “women hold up half the sky” gradually became widespread, and women’s literacy and employment rates significantly increased (the female illiteracy rate in 1949 exceeded 90%; the number of primary school female pupils in 1952 was more than double that in 1949). In social governance, social ills such as prostitution, opium and gambling were quickly eradicated. Grassroots political power—sub-district offices, residents’ committees, township people’s governments—covering urban and rural areas was established. Mass vaccination programs and literacy campaigns were promoted. From 1949–1952, over 10 million people were made literate nationwide, greatly improving public health and education. People’s national identity and collective consciousness significantly strengthened, transforming from “subjects” into “citizens,” and social cohesion reached an unprecedented height.

(4) Cultural Level: Constructing the Culture of People and Reshaping National Spirit and Cultural Confidence

Since modern times, China had experienced a predicament of cultural inferiority under the impact of Western powers. From the debate between “Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for application” to “total Westernization,” the dominant position of traditional Confucian culture was broken, but a new cultural system could not be established. The cultural sphere was filled with a mixture of imperialist, feudal and semi-colonial cultural content, leading to a crisis of “loss of voice” for the national spirit.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the cultural direction of “serving the people and serving socialism” was established, and a new cultural system was constructed, guided by Marxism and integrating excellent traditional national culture with revolutionary culture. On one hand, “revolutionary culture” was vigorously promoted (e. g., literary and artistic works like *The White-haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*, glorifying worker-peasant revolution and people’s heroes), shaping the national spirit of hard

struggle, self-reliance and collectivism and transforming the history of the Chinese revolution into spiritual resources for uniting the national strength. On the other hand, traditional culture underwent a process of critical inheritance, discarding feudal dross and excavating its excellent components, combining them with Marxism to form a new cultural identity. Simultaneously, simplified Chinese characters and Mandarin were promoted, and national education was popularized, breaking cultural monopolies, making culture truly “the people’s culture.” This greatly enhanced national cultural confidence and provided spiritual impetus for subsequent socialist construction.

2.2 Important Supporting Event: Convening of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference

From September 21st to 30th, 1949, the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference was held in Beiping (present Beijing). The attending representatives included delegates from the Communist Party of China, various democratic parties, individuals without party affiliation, people’s organizations, the People’s Liberation Army, various regions, various ethnic groups, and overseas Chinese, totaling 662 people. They represented the will of the people of all ethnic groups across the country, hence it was called the “Provisional People’s Congress.”

The core achievements of this conference were laying the institutional foundation and legal basis for the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. First, the *Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference* was adopted, defining state system (people’s democratic dictatorship), political system (the people’s congress system, temporarily acting through the CPPCC), and basic policies (economic, cultural, diplomatic, ethnic, etc.), serving as the “provisional constitution” for PRC in its early days. Second, it decided on state name (People’s Republic of China), national flag (the Five-Starred Red Flag), national anthem (*March of the Volunteers*), and capital (Beiping renamed Beijing). Third, the Committee of the Central People’s Government was elected, with Mao Zedong elected as Chairman of the Central People’s Government, and Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, Soong Ching-ling, Li Jishen, and Gao Gang elected as Vice Chairmen, providing organizational guarantees for the establishment of the regime.

In terms of impact, this conference was not only a model of political consultation between the Communist Party of China and various democratic parties and non-party individuals but also marked the formal formation of the “Chinese People’s Democratic United Front,” establishing China’s characteristic party system (the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation led by the Communist Party of China), laying the foundation for the subsequent development of China’s political system. At the same time, the *Common Program* adopted by the conference combined the proposals of the Communist Party of China with the wishes of the people nationwide, forging the broadest social consensus and providing legitimacy and support for the stability of the regime and the implementation of policies after the founding of New China.

2.3 Military Background: The People’s Liberation Army Liberated the Whole Country

1949 was the year of the final victory for the Chinese People’s War of Liberation (the Third Revolutionary Civil War). In January 1949, Beiping was peacefully liberated and the Pingjin (Beiping-Tianjin) Campaign ended. On April 21st, Mao Zedong and Zhu De issued the *Order to Advance to the Whole Country*, and the People’s Liberation Army launched the Yangtze River Crossing Campaign. On April 23rd, Nanjing was



liberated, marking the downfall of the Kuomintang regime on the mainland. Subsequently, the People's Liberation Army successively liberated major cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou and Chongqing. By the end of 1949, except for Taiwan, China, Xizang (peacefully liberated in 1951), and a few coastal islands, Mainland China was largely liberated.

The military victory of the People's Liberation Army was a prerequisite for the establishment of the People's Republic of China. On the one hand, the military struggle thoroughly destroyed the Kuomintang's military power, eliminating the largest armed opposition force domestically and providing military security for the stability of the new regime. On the other hand, the process of military liberation was also a process of regime takeover. The People's Liberation Army established provisional regimes in the liberated areas, implemented land reform, and stabilized social order, laying the foundation for the unification of the national regime after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Simultaneously, the military victory greatly enhanced the prestige of the Communist Party of China, making "the Communist Party of China leading the people to achieve national independence and liberation" a national consensus, thereby strengthening the regime's cohesion and legitimacy.

3. Major Global Events in 1949 and Their Impact on the World

The world in 1949 was at a critical juncture in the formation of the post-World War II "Cold War pattern" and it was also a year of flourishing national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies. "After the brutal warfare, the people of all countries around the world experienced a significant elevation in their consciousness for peace and their awareness of national democracy. Consequently, they increasingly yearned for an international environment of peace and independence, and an international order that was stable and orderly." (Yang 105) Events that occurred this year, such as the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Soviet Union's first atomic bomb test, the division of Germany and the victory of the Chinese Revolution, collectively shaped the post-war global order and had a profound impact on the world's political, military and economic landscape.

3.1 The Formal Formation of the Cold War Pattern: Establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

On April 4, 1949, 12 countries—the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Portugal and Italy—signed the *North Atlantic Treaty* in Washington, declaring the formal establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The core clause of this treaty was "collective defense"—stipulating that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" and that the contracting parties should "take such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

The establishment of NATO was a crucial step for the United States in implementing its "containment strategy" and building a Cold War military alliance system. Its impact on the world was mainly reflected in three aspects:

First, it marked the escalation of the Cold War from "political confrontation" to "military confrontation".

After World War II, the contradictions between the US and the USSR in Europe gradually intensified (e. g. , the Berlin Crisis in 1948) but previously focused mainly on political and economic spheres (e. g. , the US pushing the Marshall Plan, the USSR establishing Comecon). The formation of NATO created a formal military alliance between the United States and Western European countries, bringing Western Europe into the US military protection system. To counter this situation, the Soviet Union also rapidly adjusted its foreign strategy, reorganizing governments in Eastern European countries, purging dissenting elements, and accelerating the pace of revolutionary transformation, thereby forming the socialist bloc. (Wu 66) The confrontation between the two major blocs, the US and the USSR, directly transformed the Cold War from “covert antagonism” into an “overt military confrontation,” marking the beginning of over four decades of US-Soviet military bloc rivalry.

Second, it reshaped the European security landscape. After World War II, Western European countries generally faced “security anxieties”—with Germany defeated, Western Europe lost its “buffer zone” against the Soviet Union, and the military strength of Western European countries themselves was severely weakened by the war, making them unable to cope with the Soviet military threat individually. The establishment of NATO provided “security guarantees” for Western Europe through “US troop deployment in Europe”, for example the US deploying troops in Germany, Italy and other countries. At the same time, it made Western Europe long-term dependent on the US for security, forming a “US-led, Western Europe-following” European security architecture, which continued even after the Cold War.

Third, it promoted the diffusion of global military alliance systems. After NATO’s establishment, to counter the perceived threat, the Soviet Union, together with Eastern European countries, formed the “Warsaw Treaty Organization” in 1955, marking the formal global confrontation between the two major US-Soviet military blocs. Simultaneously, the US used NATO as a template to establish a series of military alliances in Asia and the Americas, building a global military alliance network. This extended the Cold War pattern to various regions worldwide, escalating global tensions.

3.2 The Beginning of US-Soviet Nuclear Parity: Successful Detonation of the Soviet Union’s First Atomic Bomb

After the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, it became the only country in the world to possess nuclear weapons, establishing a “nuclear monopoly.” On August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union successfully detonated its first atomic bomb [code-named “First Lightning” (RDS-1)] at the Semipalatinsk test site in Kazakhstan, becoming the second country in the world to possess nuclear weapons and breaking the American nuclear monopoly. This event had a revolutionary impact on the world military landscape and international security order.

First, it ended the American nuclear monopoly, creating “nuclear deterrence balance”. Before the successful Soviet nuclear test, the United States, with its nuclear monopoly, held a “nuclear blackmail” advantage in international affairs (e. g. , it considered using nuclear weapons during the Berlin Crisis). After the Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapons, a “Mutually Assured Destruction” (MAD) nuclear deterrence balance formed between the US and the USSR—both sides knew that any party initiating nuclear war would lead to its own destruction, thus deterring them from easily using nuclear weapons. This “balance of terror” largely prevented the outbreak of a third world war, becoming a “double-edged sword” for global security during the Cold War (both curbing all-



out war and exacerbating the risk of nuclear proliferation).

Second, it accelerated the nuclear arms race. After the Soviet Union broke the nuclear monopoly, the US and the USSR immediately launched an intense nuclear arms race—the United States successfully tested its first hydrogen bomb in 1952, with the Soviet Union following closely in 1953. Thereafter, both sides engaged in comprehensive competition in the quantity and quality of nuclear weapons. By the 1980s, the US and the USSR possessed over 90% of the world's total nuclear weapons, leaving the world under a “nuclear shadow” for a long time, while also driving the rapid development of nuclear weapons technology.

Third, it sparked the initial concept of an international nuclear non-proliferation system. Following the success of the Soviet nuclear test, the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation caused international concern—countries such as the United Kingdom and France also began to develop nuclear weapons (the UK tested an atomic bomb in 1952, France in 1960). The international community realized the need to curb nuclear proliferation through international mechanisms. Although the actual *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) was not signed until 1968, the successful Soviet nuclear test in 1949 was an important starting point for promoting international discussions on nuclear non-proliferation, laying the groundwork for the subsequent establishment of an international nuclear order.

3.3 The Solidification of European Division: The division of Germany into “West Germany” and “East Germany”

After World War II, Germany was divided into four occupation zones by the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union (the United States occupying the southwest, the United Kingdom, the northwest, France the west, and the Soviet Union the east). Berlin, the capital, was also divided into four sectors of occupation. With the intensification of the US-Soviet Cold War, the contradictions between the US, UK, France and the Soviet Union over the German issue grew increasingly sharp: in 1948, the US, UK and France announced currency reform in their occupation zones, issuing the “West German Mark.” The Soviet Union immediately issued the “East German Mark” in East Germany and East Berlin, and blockaded West Berlin, triggering the “Berlin Crisis.” In 1949, the US, UK and France decided to establish an independent state in their occupation zones, while the Soviet Union established a corresponding state in its eastern occupation zone, leading to the formal division of Germany.

On May 23, 1949, the “Federal Republic of Germany” (commonly known as “West Germany” or “Federal Germany”), formed in the US, UK and French occupation zones, was formally established, with its capital in Bonn. On October 7, the “German Democratic Republic” (commonly known as “East Germany” or “Democratic Germany”), formed in the Soviet occupation zone, was formally established, with its capital in East Berlin. The division of Germany marked the “materialization” of the Cold War in Europe. Its impact on the world was primarily reflected in the following aspects.

On one hand, it created the frontline of division of Europe into “capitalist camp” and “socialist camp”. After West Germany's establishment, it joined NATO in 1955, becoming a “bridgehead” for the US to confront the Soviet Union in Europe. East Germany, on the other hand, joined the Warsaw Pact in 1955, becoming a “security barrier” for the Soviet Union in Europe. The division of Germany explicitly divided Europe into two camps. The two sides formed a long-term military confrontation on the German border, especially after the

construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, becoming one of the tensest areas in Europe during the Cold War, a situation that ended only with German reunification in 1990.

On the other hand, it influenced the divergence of the European economic landscape. Under the assistance of the Marshall Plan, West Germany, relying on its pre-war industrial base and the support of the United States, implemented market economy reforms, which led to rapid economic recovery and development, becoming a major economic power in Europe in the 1950s. East Germany, influenced by the Soviet Union, implemented a planned economy. It initially experienced rapid economic development with the support of Soviet resources, but in the long run, due to the rigidity of the planned economy and its isolation from the West, its economy gradually lagged behind West Germany. The economic divergence in Germany became a “testing ground” for two different economic systems in Europe and also influenced the subsequent process of European economic integration.

Finally, it became the focal point of “human rights diplomacy” and “ideological confrontation” during the Cold War. After East Germany’s establishment, due to economic and political reasons, a large number of East German citizens fled to West Germany through West Berlin (approximately 2.6 million people fled to West Germany between 1949 and 1961). To prevent citizens from fleeing, the Soviet Union and East Germany constructed the “Berlin Wall” in 1961, dividing Berlin into eastern and western parts. The construction of the Berlin Wall became a symbol of ideological confrontation during the Cold War—the West viewed it as a “symbol of tyranny” while the East saw it as a “barrier against Western infiltration.” The struggles surrounding the Berlin Wall (such as the Berlin Crisis in 1961 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) became the focus of international attention during the Cold War and reflected the fierce confrontation between the two ideologies in Europe.

3.4 Climax of National Liberation Movements: Booming Independence Movements in Asian and African Colonies

In 1949, against the backdrop of the post-World War II decolonization movement, “western colonial empires rapidly disintegrated, and imperial barriers that had previously hindered global economic integration were dismantled.” (Qian 165) Multiple colonized nations in Asia and Africa launched independence movements. Among the most representative were Indonesia’s independence and the crucial progress of the Vietnamese resistance against French rule.

(1) Independence of Indonesia

Indonesia was a former colony of the Netherlands (“Dutch East Indies”) and was occupied by Japan during World War II. In August 1945, Indonesia declared independence and established the Republic of Indonesia. However, the Netherlands returned after World War II, attempting to restore colonial rule and engaging in a four-year war with Indonesia. In December 1949, the Netherlands was forced to sign the *Round Table Conference Agreement* with Indonesia in The Hague, recognizing the independence of the Republic of Indonesia (except for West Irian, which returned to Indonesia in 1963). Indonesia became the first former colony in Southeast Asia to achieve independence through armed struggle.

Indonesia’s independence played a significant role in promoting national liberation movements in Asia. On the one hand, it demonstrated that colonized nations could defeat old colonial empires through armed struggle, greatly inspiring independence movements in other Southeast Asian colonies, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and



the Philippines. On the other hand, after gaining independence, Indonesia adopted a policy of “non-alignment” (later becoming an important member of the Non-Aligned Movement), providing a model for subsequent Asian, African, and Latin American countries to break free from US-Soviet bloc control and pursue independent development.

(2) Turning Point in the Vietnamese War of Resistance Against France

Vietnam was a former colony of France. In August 1945, Vietnamese Communist Party leader Ho Chi Minh declared the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. “The French refused to recognize the new regime, and war ensued. Laos and Cambodia were easily reoccupied by the French, but an exhausting struggle dragged on in Vietnam.” (Stavrianos 165) In 1949, the victory of the Chinese Revolution provided crucial support to Vietnam’s resistance against France. The Communist Party of China established close ties with the Communist Party of Vietnam, beginning to provide military aid and allowing Vietnam to establish rear bases on the Sino-Vietnamese border.

The support in 1949 transformed the Vietnamese war of resistance against France from an “isolated struggle” into a “protracted war with external support,” laying the groundwork for Vietnam’s decisive defeat of the French forces at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which forced France to recognize Vietnamese independence. The progress of the Vietnamese war of resistance against France not only propelled the national liberation movement in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) but also became the first significant case of “supporting Asian, African, and Latin American national liberation movements” after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, marking China’s emergence on the international stage as a player in “anti-imperialist and anti-colonial” roles. This had a significant impact, such as the proposal of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” on China’s subsequent foreign policy.

4. The Interactive Impact of Major Events in China and Abroad in 1949: The Mutual Shaping of China and the World

In 1949, China and the world were not isolated but deeply interconnected—the victory of the Chinese Revolution influenced the global landscape, while changes in the world order also shaped China’s development path. At the same time, the major events of this year collectively propelled the restructuring of the global order after World War II.

4.1 *The Impact of the Victory of the Chinese Revolution on the World: Changing the Balance of International Forces and Promoting the Global Wave of Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Colonialism*

The founding of the People’s Republic of China was one of the most significant events in world history after World War II and its impact extended far beyond China itself. At the beginning, it disrupted the initial balance of the U. S. -Soviet-led “bipolar structure” and strengthened the socialist camp. In the early post-World War II period, the world initially exhibited a “U. S. -Soviet bipolar” pattern. However, the socialist camp, primarily composed of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, was relatively weak in strength. The inclusion of China, the world’s most populous country (with a population of approximately 540 million in 1949, accounting for 25% of the global population), into the socialist camp significantly enhanced the camp’s total population,

territorial area and resource reserves. This led to the formation of a socialist camp system centered on the “Soviet Union-China-Eastern Europe,” which created a more balanced confrontation with the U. S. -led capitalist camp and fundamentally altered the early post-war international balance of power characterized by U. S. dominance.

Then, it provided a “New Path of Development” for colonial and semi-colonial countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The victory of the Chinese Revolution served as a successful example for colonial and semi-colonial countries to achieve liberation through “armed struggle led by a proletarian party, encircling the cities from the countryside, and seizing political power by force.” This approach differed from the Soviet Union’s model of “urban armed uprising” and was better suited to the conditions of many Asian, African and Latin American countries, which had large agricultural populations, weak industrial foundations, and severe colonial oppression. As a result, the success of the Chinese Revolution provided both ideological inspiration and practical templates for national liberation movements in India, Burma, Indonesia, Cuba and various African nations. Many political parties in these regions, such as the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of Indonesia, and African national liberation movements, began studying the experiences of the Chinese Revolution to advance their own struggles against imperialism and colonialism. This significantly accelerated the collapse of the global colonial system (from 1949 to 1960, more than 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America gained independence, a period known as the “high tide of decolonization”).

Finally, it promoted the diversification of the global economic system. After its founding, the People’s Republic of China neither aligned itself with the U. S. -led capitalist world economic system nor entirely copied the Soviet Union’s planned economy model. Instead, it explored a “New Democratic Economy with Chinese characteristics”, which later transitioned to a socialist economy. This exploration provided a reference for other developing countries seeking to break free from the economic control of developed nations and pursue independent development paths. Simultaneously, through economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries (such as the economic aid clauses in the 1950 *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance*), China contributed to economic integration within the socialist camp. This led to the formation of a socialist economic system that paralleled the capitalist world economic system, transforming the global economy from a “single capitalist system” to a “dual-system coexistence” of diversification. This structure persisted until the end of the Cold War, after which the two systems gradually began to integrate.

4.2 The Impact of the World Order on China: How the Cold War Environment Shaped China’s Diplomacy and Development Path

The global landscape in 1949, particularly the intensification of the Cold War, profoundly influenced the diplomatic strategies and development choices of the newly established People’s Republic of China.

First, it caused the formation of the “Leaning to One Side” foreign policy. At the founding of the People’s Republic of China, “the US leveraged the international order it led, NATO, and the UN to contain China,” thereby impeding China’s development. (Zhao, 9) The People’s Republic of China adopted the “Leaning to One Side” foreign policy to safeguard its national sovereignty and security. This meant firmly aligning with the socialist camp and forming an alliance with the Soviet Union. This policy enabled the new China to gain critical support from the Soviet Union in its early years. It also helped China avoid isolation during the early Cold War period. However, it somewhat restricted China’s engagement with capitalist countries, a limitation that persisted



until the normalization of Sino-American relations in the 1970s.

Second, it enhanced the urgency of national defense construction. The success of the Soviet nuclear tests and the U. S. military deployments in Asia exposed the newly established People's Republic of China to severe external military threats, particularly nuclear threats. Consequently, from its inception, China placed high priority on national defense, aiming to build a powerful defense force as a key national goal. In the 1950s, China focused on developing heavy industry (the First Five-Year Plan emphasized steel, machinery and military industries), and in 1955, it initiated its nuclear weapons program (the "Two Bombs, One Satellite" project). These decisions were closely linked to the Cold War security environment and laid the foundation for China's subsequent emergence as a nuclear power, safeguarding its national sovereignty.

Third, it planned economy orientation in economic development. Amid the Cold War, the newly established People's Republic of China faced economic blockades from capitalist countries, preventing its integration into the capitalist world economic system. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union, as the core of the socialist camp, provided China with a "template" for a planned economy and substantial assistance. Thus, China adopted a planned economy system for its economic development—formulating unified national economic plans and concentrating resources to develop heavy industry, rapidly establishing an independent industrial system. This approach initially met the need for "self-reliance" in the Cold War context but later revealed inherent rigidities, ultimately leading to its transformation after the 1978 reform and opening-up policy.

4.3 1949: The "Year of Restructuring" in the Post-World War II Global Order

The major events in China and abroad in 1949 collectively propelled the restructuring of the post-World War II global order, resulting in three key characteristics.

(1) Transition from a "Post-War Peace Order" to a "Cold War Confrontation Order". In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the international community attempted to establish a "collective security system" through the United Nations. However, events in 1949—such as the formation of NATO, the division of Germany, and the U. S. -Soviet nuclear confrontation—diminished the role of the UN. The standoff between the two major camps, led by the U. S. and the Soviet Union, became the core of the global order, persisting until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

(2) Transition from a "Colonial System" to a "National Independence System". The victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, along with Indonesia's independence and the turning point in Vietnam's war against French colonialism, spurred a wave of national liberation movements across Asia, Africa and Latin America. The global colonial system began to collapse, and by the 1960s, most colonized nations had gained independence. The world's political map shifted from "a few colonial empires ruling over numerous colonies" to "sovereign nations coexisting as equals." The number of UN member states increased from 51 in 1945 to 99 by 1960.

(3) Transition from a "Single Development Path" to "Diverse Development Paths". Before World War II, the development paths of major countries were largely limited to "capitalism" or "colonial dependency." In 1949, the establishment of the socialist People's Republic of China and the success of the Soviet nuclear tests demonstrated the technological prowess of socialist states. Meanwhile, countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America began exploring "third paths" (such as the Non-Aligned Movement). This shift transformed the global development landscape from a "singular capitalist path" to a diversified structure encompassing capitalism,

socialism and nationalism—a framework that continues to this day.

4.4 The Historical Legacy and Contemporary Significance of 1949

As a pivotal year marking “China’s rebirth and global restructuring,” the historical legacy of 1949 continues to exert a profound influence on contemporary China and the world. For China, the major events of 1949 laid the foundation for modern China’s “institutional framework”, “economic base”, and “national spirit”. It serves as the historical starting point for understanding China’s development path—from “standing up” in 1949, to “becoming prosperous” through the reform and opening-up in 1978, and to “growing strong” in the new era. China’s development has always been a continuation and evolution of the historical logic that began in 1949.

For the world, the major events of 1949 shaped the framework of the global order after World War II. Its legacy continues to influence the contemporary international landscape—from NATO’s ongoing expansion and nuclear non-proliferation issues to the rising influence of developing countries on the global stage, all of which are closely linked to the historical processes of 1949.

From a broader perspective, the history of 1949 demonstrates that a country’s development path must be aligned with its national conditions and the construction of a global order must respect the sovereignty and autonomous choices of all nations. These historical lessons hold significant relevance for contemporary China as it adheres to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and promotes the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. They also offer valuable insights for countries worldwide in addressing the challenges of globalization and forging a more just and equitable international order.

5. A Brief History of the English Translation of Mao Zedong’s Poems

Mao Zedong’s poems, “which not only highly condense Mao Zedong’s life’s pursuits and rich experiences but also bear witness to the arduous journey of the Chinese revolution led by the Communist Party of China,” (Deng 82) have become valuable documents for studying Mao Zedong’s military thought, appreciating his literary talent, exploring the spirit of Chinese soldiers, and understanding Chinese history through their international dissemination. As early as the 1930s and 1940s, some European and American journalists, writers and scholars who visited the revolutionary base areas in northern Shaanxi introduced Mao Zedong’s poems to Western readers through various means and channels. In the 1950s, European and American countries such as the Soviet Union, the United States, France and Italy began to officially publish translations of Mao Zedong’s poems. From the founding of the People’s Republic of China to the end of the “Cultural Revolution”, the number of English translation versions of Mao Zedong’s poems abroad increased significantly, and the translator groups showed a diversified characteristic, which can be roughly divided into three categories: foreign translator groups, joint translator groups of foreign and Chinese translators, and Chinese translator groups. Next, a brief introduction to the foreign English translation versions and translator groups is given in chronological order.

The 1930s saw the beginning of the English translation of Mao Zedong’s poems. In 1937, American journalist Edgar Snow attached his translation of *The Long March* at the end of the “Long March” section in the English-language version of *Red Star Over China*. Published by large-scale publishing houses such as Gollancz in the UK and Random House in the US, it was reprinted many times. “It was through his poem *Seven-word-line*



Poem: The Long March that Mao Zedong's stature as a poet was first recognized by the Western world." (Zhuang 65) This was the first translation and introduction of Mao Zedong's poems. British writer and journalist Robert Payne, who once taught at the Southwest Associated University, published his diary *China Awake* in New York in 1947, which recorded his life experiences in China and showed the Chinese society in a state of war and revolution to the Western world.

The 1950s marked a pivotal period for the translation and global dissemination of Mao Zedong's poetry. Chen Kui, recognized as the first Chinese translator of Mao Zedong's poems into English, published his translations in the July–September 1957 issue (Volume 3) of *The Asia-Africa Review*, an Indian quarterly journal. As one of the earliest Chinese associates of American journalist Agnes Smedley, Chen Kui laid the groundwork for introducing Mao Zedong's poetic legacy to the English-speaking world.

In 1957, the *Poetry Journal* (China's premiere literary publication) debuted with 18 of Mao Zedong's poems. These were translated by Ye Junjian (Deputy Editor of *Chinese Literature*), Qian Zhongshu and Yu Baoju, with final polish by British sinologist Andrew Boyd. The English version was published globally in the May-June 1958 issue (No. 3) of *Chinese Literature*, followed by the first standalone English edition, *Mao Tse-tung: Nineteen Poems*, released by the Foreign Languages Press in September 1958. The first 18 poems retained the *Chinese Literature* translation, while the 19th poem, *Die Lian Hua: Reply to Li Shuyi*, was translated by British scholar Gladys Yang. "From the perspective of its format and execution, the publication of this English translation was the first official English version of Mao Zedong's poems, with extensive annotations and interpretations that provided a practical basis for understanding the poetry." (Zhang 21) Notably, the book's preface attributed the translation solely to Andrew Boyd, streamlining the translator credit despite collaborative efforts. The enthusiastic translation and introduction of Mao Zedong's poems by numerous scholars, writers, and poets both domestically and internationally, coupled with the active publication and dissemination of English translations and interpretive articles by various publishing houses and journals, "all indicated that the cross-cultural dissemination of Mao Zedong's poetry was burgeoning and gaining strong momentum." (Qi and Hu 7)

In the 1960s, translation efforts became institutionalized. The Mao Zedong Poetry Translation Finalization Team was established in 1961, led by Yuan Shuipai and including Qiao Guanhua, Qian Zhongshu, Ye Junjian, and later Zhao Puchu. American scholar Sol Adler provided linguistic expertise. In 1965, British-Chinese historian Jerome Chen published *Mao and the Chinese Revolution with Thirty-seven Poems by Mao Tse-tung*, featuring translations co-authored with British poet Michael Bullock. Based on the statistics compiled by relevant scholars, this book also boasted the largest number of global library holdings for an English translation. (He 34) Another significant work was Wong Man's *Poems of Mao Tse-Tung*, published in 1966 by Hong Kong's Oriental Horizon Press.

Throughout the 1970s, dissemination activities heated up following Nixon's visit to China, gradually reaching a peak of intensity in Western countries, including the United States. (Qi and Hu 8) In 1972, Mao Zedong's poems stepped into the international spotlight at a faster pace, and four translations and works related to Mao Zedong's poems or the Chinese Revolution were successively published—a move that testified to the rapid rise of China's international status. New American Library in New York published *Mao Tse-tung: An Anthology of His Writings*, a monograph by Anne Fremantle. Jonathan Cape in London published *The Morning Deluge: Mao Tsetung and The Chinese Revolution 1893–1954*, written by Han Suyin. The English version of *Poems of*

Mao Tse-tung, co-translated by Nieh Hua-ling “who was a world-renowned Chinese-American writer” (Li and Tao 105) and her husband Paul Engle, was published by Simon & Schuster in the United States. *The Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, co-translated by American poet and translator Willis Barnstone and Chinese translator Ko Ching-po, has a detailed introduction about Mao’s life and the revolution as well as the poems he translated, published by Harper & Row in New York. (Barnstone 3)

In 1975, Wang Hui-Ming, a Chinese-American, published *Ten Poems and Lyrics by Mao Tze-tung* with the University of Massachusetts Press. The book was reprinted by Jonathan Cape in London in 1976, with the same content.

In 1976, Foreign Languages Press and the Commercial Press published the English translation of *Mao Zedong’s Poems* in five formats, containing 39 of Mao Zedong’s poems. This translation is widely regarded as the most authoritative English translation of Mao Zedong’s poems to date. It is not only related to the image construction of Mao Zedong and the country, but also generally recognized by the international community as the “official translation” and has become the blueprint for translations in other languages. (In 2004, Foreign Languages Press reprinted this translation, uniformly changing the Wade-Giles romanization of the tune names of *ci* poems to Hanyu Pinyin. This revision distinctly reflected the enhancement of China’s cultural confidence.) In August 1978, *Thirty-Nine Poems of Chairman Mao (English Translation)*, translated by Wu Xianglin, a scholar from the Department of Foreign Languages, Nanjing Normal University, was published as part of the journal series of Nanjing University.

The 1980s saw continued enthusiasm for English translations of Mao Zedong’s poetry, with four notable works published during this period. In 1980, Lin Nancy T. released *Reverberations: A New Translation of Complete Poems of Mao Tse-tung* through the Hong Kong Joint Publishing Company, offering a comprehensive annotated translation of Mao Zedong’s entire poetic corpus. In May 1980, Hunan People’s Publishing House published Zhao Zhentao’s *Poems of Mao Zedong*, which was reprinted in 1992. In 1981, Xu Yuanchong’s *Earth-Shaking Songs (Epic of Chinese Revolution)*, a collection of revolutionary poetry including Mao Zedong’s poems, was published by The Commercial Press (Hong Kong). In 1986, Ma Wen-yee’s *Snow Glistens on the Great Wall: A Translation of the Complete Collection of Mao Tse-tung’s Poetry with Notes and Historical Commentary* was released by the University of California, Santa Barbara Press, combining literary translation with historical analysis.

The 1990s held special significance, particularly 1993—the centenary of Mao Zedong’s birth—when four major translations emerged. Zhao Hengyuan and Paul Woods’ bilingual *Mao Zedong’s Poems* was published by Tianjin People’s Publishing House. In the preface, Zhao Hengyuan stated that while translating Mao Zedong’s poems requires ensuring elegant and beautiful foreign language wording and sentence structure, “the primary importance lied in the correct understanding and accurate grasp of the profound thought and romantic descriptions within his poetry.” (Zhao and Woods 1) This assertion established the tone of the translation. In August 1993, Jiangsu Education Press released Huang Long’s *An English Version of Mao Zedong’s Poesies*. October saw Peking University Press publish Gu Zhengkun’s *Poems of Mao Zedong: with Rhymed Versions and Annotations*, while China Translation & Publishing House issued Xu Yuanchong’s commemorative *Selected Poems of Mao Zedong (Sino-English Parallel Text)*. (In 2020, China Translation & Publishing House reissued Xu’s work, expanding it by 24 additional poems to reflect evolving scholarly and cultural perspectives.)



The 21st century has witnessed a renewed enthusiasm for English translations of Mao Zedong's poetry. In 2002, Professor Zhang Chunhou of Yan'an University partnered with C. Edwin Vaughan, an American sociologist and professor at the University of Missouri, to release *Mao Zedong as Poet and Revolutionary Leader: Social and Historical Perspectives* in New York. This work "featured 89 poems and incorporated social and historical interpretations, citing both Chinese and Western scholarly sources." (Zhang XI) "It was said that this was the most extensive and detailed collection of Mao Zedong's Poems in the US. (Zhang 75) In 2007, Zhang Chunhou's book *World Perspectives on 100 Poems and Ci of Mao Zedong in English and Chinese, A Comprehensive Political, Social and Historical Research* was published in Hong Kong. In 2010, Li Zhengshuan's translation of Mao Zedong's poems: *Selected Poems of Mao Zedong in Chinese and English* was published by Hebei People's Publishing House. In 2011, Li Zhengshuan's new book: *Poems of Mao Zedong in Chinese and English* was published by UCANDU Learning Centers Publishing. Also in 2011, Wang Hongyin's *Zhu Mo's Collected Works (Translated Volume)* was published by World Publishing Xi'an Co., LTD. This book includes 73 translations of Mao Zedong's poems and verses. These translations of poems and verses all embody the translator's principle of "Westernizing Chinese poetry, modernizing ancient poetry, and beautifying with subtleties". In this year, Huan Ran's *Poems of Mao Zedong in Chinese and English* was published by Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House. Li Zhengshuan published *A Refined Translation of Select Poems of Mao Zedong* in 2018, *A Refined Translation of Select Poems of Mao Zedong in Chinese, English and Spanish* 2020, *Gems of Mao Zedong's Poems (in Chinese, English and Portuguese)* and *A Selected Translation of Poems of Mao Zedong (in Chinese, English and Tibetan)* in 2021 respectively. And Li Zhengshuan published *Selected Comparative Reading of English Translation of Mao Zedong's Poems* in 2022, which is used as a textbook for elective courses in English and Translation majors, as well as for general education courses across the university.

The external dissemination of Mao Zedong's poetry transmitted the authentic image of a great leader to foreign readers, prompting resonance and not only benefiting the shaping of his personal image but also providing an opportunity for the propagation of traditional Chinese culture. (Wei 26) Although the early efforts of foreign translators were a product of information asymmetry under specific historical conditions, they also reflected the unique charm of Mao Zedong's poetry as a cross-cultural symbol. With the strengthening of China's national power and the growth of its translation capabilities, domestic translations had gradually become mainstream due to their "more accurate and comprehensive understanding of Mao Zedong's original poems, reflecting the latest achievements in Mao Zedong poetry studies." (Li 3) Nevertheless, early foreign translations retained irreplaceable significance in promoting the international spread of Chinese culture.

6. Unique Significance and Value of Mao Zedong's Poetry Since 1949

Mao Zedong's poetry is a brilliant pearl in the treasure trove of modern Chinese literature and an important milestone in the history of Chinese poetry. It is not only an artistic expression of Mao Zedong's personal thoughts and emotions, but also "embodies the immense courage and passion of communists and the broad masses of the people to innovate in the cause of revolution and construction" (Zhang et al. 89), possessing profound ideological content, unique artistic style, and far-reaching historical significance. His poetry since 1949 represents a continuation and evolution of Mao Zedong's personal sentiments, a statesman's broad vision, and a

philosopher's contemplation in the new era. These works transcend mere literary texts, becoming unique "codes" for interpreting the social atmosphere of the early days of PRC, the inner world of the leader, and the changing spirit of the times.

After 1949, China experienced a series of upheavals, including the Liberation War, the War to Resist U. S. Aggression and Aid Korea, the restoration of the national economy, the Three Great Transformations, the upsurge of socialist construction, and the "Great Leap Forward". Situated at the core of decision-making, Mao Zedong's poetry writing often closely follows the pulse of history, brimming with the heroic spirit of victors and the aspirations of builders. "The cock's clarion brings the world broad daylight" vividly symbolizes the end of the old era and the birth of New China, while "Our poet's zeal has never reached such a great height" genuinely expresses post-victory joy and anticipation for the rebirth of cultural endeavors. These poems no longer sing of war but of construction, transforming the philosophical concept of "man will conquer nature" into an ardent praise for socialist industrialization, thus becoming the most poetic national archive of that passionate era of construction.

As China stepping onto the international stage, the themes of Mao Zedong's poetry also broaden to encompass the globe and focus on the world. With the magnificent imagination of "And cut you into three parts?/One part I would give to Europe,/Another part I would give to America,/The rest I would return to the country in the East," he artistically expresses his grand conception of breaking the old-world order and establishing a new international order. This ideal pursuit of "a world of peace,/Might share your warmth and cold" shares a lineage with the contemporary concept of a shared future for humankind, demonstrating foresight that transcended its era. Moreover, the prevailing global situation of surging national independence and liberation movements is also a theme in his poetry, reflecting Mao Zedong's expansive vision and broad-mindedness as a great leader. These poetic works are not only a strategist's profound insights into international affairs but also a revolutionary's earnest hopes for the common future of humanity.

In sum, Mao Zedong's poetry written since 1949 is neither casual verse composed in times of prosperity nor mere personal literary remnants; rather, it constitutes a record of the mental and emotional journey of a poet-statesman embarking on a new historical course. These poems function simultaneously as "epics" celebrating the achievements of socialist construction, preserving the emotional temperature of the early years of the People's Republic of China; as "heroic songs" expressing international ideals; and as "splendid chapters" of artistic exploration. They are "consistently infused with revolutionary heroism and optimism characterized by active engagement with the world, unrelenting struggle, an indomitable spirit, and contempt for all hardships and obstacles" (Li 133). With their majestic momentum, rich imagination, and profound reflection, these works have secured an unshakable position in the history of modern Chinese literature. At the same time, they are deeply intertwined with China's socialist exploratory practices, providing a valuable avenue for understanding mid-twentieth-century Chinese history from literary and philosophical perspectives and for apprehending the pulse of the era. Their significance lies not only in their literary and historical value, but also in the enduring reflections they continue to inspire.

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(Editors: Derrick MI & JIANG Qing)