

Multi-Level Diplomatic Strategy on Overseas Chinese Protection of the Republic of China: A Case Study on Chinese's Repatriation to Burma (1946-1948)

Cancan Zhou^{*}

海外自国民保護をめぐる外交

—中国国民政府とミャンマー華僑送還問題（1946－1948）—

周 燦燦^{*}

Abstract

This article mainly conducts a case study on Chinese's repatriation to Burma from 1946 to 1948 to discuss how the government of the Republic of China (ROC) managed the multi-level diplomatic strategy on overseas Chinese protection in its regime time (1912-1949). The operation was the largest operation for overseas Chinese protection of the ROC Government in modern history of China but with limited previous academic works. By utilizing the unpublished primary archives, the author concentrates on the diplomatic strategy the ROC Government carried out in conflict management of this operation. The dissolving of the conflicts in overseas Chinese repatriation to Burma exactly benefited from the multi-level diplomatic strategy on Overseas Chinese protection. Returning stranded overseas Chinese to their registered domiciles was a diplomatic operation, in which the right of repatriation was secured thorough bilateral talks and the practice was guided through UN intervention. Generally speaking, the ROC Government mainly pushed forward the operation into three levels: along with the bilateral talks between two countries (the governmental level), it also concentrated on international support (international level) and overseas Chinese assistance (non-governmental level). The operation on Chinese's repatriation to Burma (1946-1948) was a cooperation between a national government, the ROC Government, a transnational organization, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), and overseas Chinese communities, overseas Chinese associations in Burma.. In this article, the case study on Chinese's repatriation to Burma (1946-1948) can efficiently demonstrate the flexible multi-level diplomatic strategy of the ROC Government, whose firm faith and will to protect the security of every single overseas citizen should be positively evaluated even in today.

^{*}Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University; School of International Relations, Peking University; Double Doctoral Degree Program

1. Introduction

The problem of displaced persons was an international issue of and after World War II. In 1941, after the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia produced a large mass of overseas Chinese intended to take refuge pouring back to China. At the end of the War, the Republic of China (ROC) Government, with the help of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, or UNRRA, offered assistance to overseas Chinese stranded in China those who needed assistance in returning to their established domiciles before the war on reentry, which was called Chinese's repatriation. The Chinese's repatriation was the continuation of the ROC Government's action to relief overseas Chinese in wartime. Also, returning such a large quantity of stranded overseas Chinese to their registered domiciles was a unique phenomenon in China's history.

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was an international relief agency, whose purpose was to "plan, co-ordinate, administer or arrange for the administration of measures for the relief of victims of war in any area under the control of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical and other essential services".¹ UNRRA got involved in the project to repatriate overseas Chinese in the late 1940s. Along with various branch offices of the ROC Government, it registered overseas Chinese seeking repatriation, helped provide maintenance expenses for the destitute while they waited for permission to return to their prior residences, helped arrange for travel documents and visas, and paid for transport.² The Chinese officials viewed cooperation with UNRRA as a means of leveraging China's equal participation in post-war order in which they would play a central role.³ The efforts devoted in the operation to repatriate stranded overseas Chinese demonstrated several important points about the ROC Government's diplomatic policy and its interaction with the world after war.

In this article, the author is trying to explore the diplomatic conflict management policy of the ROC Government from the Chinese's repatriation to Burma case (1946-1948), a model of multi-level diplomatic strategy of the ROC Government, which, was of great importance for understanding China's relationship to global currents of development.

2. Literature Review

The academic study on overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia really has a long history while few historical studies were mainly on Chinese's repatriation of and after World War II. It was since 2003, the publishing of *The History of Repatriations of Overseas Chinese*⁴, a series archives of

¹ Army Information School. (1946). Agreement for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The Public's Library and Digital Archive. <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1943/431109a.html> (May 1946).

² Louise W. Holborn (1956). *The International Refugee Organization, a Specialized Agency of the United Nations, its History and Work 1946-1952*. London: Oxford University Press.

³ United Nations Organization. (1945). China Weekly Reports, 1944-5(S-052800053). United Nations Organization Archives (July 1945).

⁴ 謝培屏 (2005). *戰後遣返華僑史料彙編*. Taipei: Academia Historica.

historical documents concerning Chinese's repatriation after World War II in Taiwan, that more and more attention has been paid on this topic. However, in Burma case, the studies still need to be improved. *The History of Overseas Chinese in Burma* edited by The Overseas Community Affairs Council (Taiwan)⁵ and *The General Introduction of Overseas Chinese in Burma*⁶ are the earliest academic works themed with overseas Chinese in Burma but lack introductions of the repatriation operation. MENG Xian-jun and JI Zong-an's research *Post-War Myanmar-Chinese Repatriations to Myanmar by the National Government: A Preliminary Study* comes to a positive evaluation of the repatriation operation without a historical perspective⁷. LING Yan's *An Analysis of Myanmar-Chinese Repatriations to Myanmar after World War II* is a conflict management study but not a diplomatic strategy study of the ROC Government when discussing the repatriation case in Burma.⁸

Chinese's repatriation to Burma was a significant operation of the Displace Persons Program (DP Program) in China carried out by UNRRA, whose aim was to provide relief and resettlement assistance to the displaced persons in China after the war.⁹ The articles on DP Program in China are limited. *Allies, Enemies and Aliens Migration and U.S-Chinese Relations, 1940-1965*¹⁰ and *Text of Proposed China Aid Bill and Background Information on Economic Assistance Program for China*¹¹ give a rough introduction on Chinese's repatriation in Southeast Asia in order to compare with the limits on Chinese immigration or reentry after wartime in the United States. *UNRRA in China: 1945-1947* is an official report about the operations and programs which UNRRA conducted to reconstruct and rehabilitate China and only gives the statistics of DP Program.¹² J. Franklin Ray Jr.'s *UNRRA in China: A Case Study of the Interplay of Interest in a Program of International Aid to an Undeveloped Country*¹³ and Rana Mitter's *Imperialism, Transnationalism, and the Reconstruction of Post-war China: UNRRA in China, 1944-7*¹⁴ demonstrate the organizational relations between China and UNRRA in reconstruction and rehabilitation works within China. The efforts of the ROC Government and UNRRA to cope with the apocalyptic conditions of late wartime did in fact draw on a combination of transnationally inflected ideas combined with local practice. The crossed wires between the

⁵ 《華僑志》編纂委員會 (1967). *緬甸華僑志*. Taipei: 《華僑志》編纂委員會.

⁶ 盧偉林 (1988). *緬甸華僑概況*. Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Co.

⁷ 孟宪军, 纪宗安 (2010). “战后国民政府对缅遣侨问题初探.” *东南亚研究 (SOUTH EAST ASIAN STUDIES)*, Vol.1, No.6, 66-71.

⁸ 凌彦 (2014). “二战后归国难侨‘复员’缅甸析论.” *东南亚研究 (SOUTH EAST ASIAN STUDIES)*, Vol.1, No.6, 34-40.

⁹ United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (1948). *UNRRA in China: 1945-1947*. Washington: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Print.

¹⁰ Meredith Leigh Oyen. (2007). *Allies, Enemies and Aliens Migration and U.S-Chinese Relations, 1940-1965*. (Doctoral thesis, Georgetown University, Washington, the United States). Retrieved from <http://gradworks.umi.com/33/13/3313029.html>.

¹¹ The Committee on Foreign Affairs (1948). *Text of Proposed China Aid Bill and Background Information on Economic Assistance Program for China*. Washington: U.S Government Print.

¹² Ibid9.

¹³ J.Franklin Ray Jr (1947). *UNRRA in China: A Case Study of the Interplay of Interest in a Program of International Aid to an Undeveloped Country*. New York: International Secretariat Institute of Pacific Relations.

¹⁴ Rana Mitter (2013). “Imperialism, Transnationalism, and the Reconstruction of Post-war China: UNRRA in China, 1944-7.” *Past & Present*, Vol.1, No.218, 51-69.

ROC Government and UNRRA on Chinese's repatriation to Burma were evident, nevertheless, few researches on how the ROC Government interacted and cooperated with UNRRA in repatriation have been worked out. The detailed studies are of great significance for understanding characteristics of the diplomatic strategy of the ROC Government.

Based on the archives of the ROC Government¹⁵, the national archives of Myanmar¹⁶, media reports, academic journals, and other historical resources, this article aims to give a comprehensive historical introduction of the repatriation operation. Meanwhile, by a deep look at the diplomatic conflict negotiations in the repatriation operation, the author is trying to examine, analyze and evaluate the diplomatic strategy of the ROC Government.

3. The Background of Chinese's Repatriation to Burma

Since Burma was occupied in the nineteenth century, the British colonizers had been implementing a loose immigration policy due to the lack of labor forces in natural resources market, thus more and more overseas Indians and Chinese entered Burma.¹⁷ The census data of the British Burma Government showed that the total number of overseas Chinese in Burma was about 121,000 in Year 1911, 149,060 in Year 1921, and 193,594 in Year 1931. The data of Year 1941 was lost due to the war. It was estimated that the total number of overseas Chinese in Burma reached about 300,000 by the outbreak of the Pacific War.¹⁸

As immigrants poured into Burma, the employment market got increasingly saturated. The conflict between Burmese and foreign residents became more and more intense, and Burmese became more and more antiforeign. Before the outbreak of the Pacific War, the British Burma Government had a try to control the entry of foreigners. Immediately after the outbreak of the Pacific War (at the end of Year 1941), namely in early Year 1942, Burma promulgated *The Registration of Foreigners Act*, to lift its formality control over the exit and entry of citizens from China, America and the Netherlands for the need of population mobility in wartime.¹⁹

Considering the unrest situation, overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia decided to take refuge back to China. According to the registration data of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission under

¹⁵ Sincere gratitude goes to Mr. YAN En-Hao, the Doctoral student of National Chengchi University (Taiwan), and Professor WANG Kuan-Hsi, the alumni of National Taiwan University, for their assistance on collecting Kuomintang (KMT) Government archives in Taiwan.

¹⁶ Sincere gratitude goes Ms. Ha Trang Doan Pham, the alumni of Peking University, for her assistance on collecting national archives in Myanmar.

¹⁷ The reports on Burma Evacuees 'repatriation of India can be referenced to *Times of India*, "Burma Evacuees 'Return: Mr. J. Mehta's Statement", Nov.12, 1945; "Burma Evacuees 'Repatriation: Arrangements in Bombay", Dec.7, 1945; "Burma Evacuees: To the Editor", Jan.28, 1946; "Burma Evacuees", Feb.7, 1946; "Burma Evacuees: General Repatriation after Monsoon", Jul.2, 1946; etc.

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of Republic of China (1935). "緬甸華僑人數調查報告表". Nanking: The Report of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China; 何鳳嬌 (1999). *東南亞華僑資料彙編*. 25-27.Taipei: Academia Historica.

¹⁹ National Archives Department. *The Registration of Foreigners Act*. Accession No.21, Series No.15/3 (9), 4-5, Yangon: National Archives.

the ROC Government and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureaus in Fukien (Fujian) Province, Kwangtung (Guangdong) Province and Yunnan Province in 1942, the total number of returned overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia reached 183,285, and among which 29,391 were from Burma.²⁰ The ROC Government found it difficult to settle such a large quantity of returned Chinese in a short time but just resorted to sending them to their ancestral hometowns and housed the homeless. The returned Chinese from Burma were mainly from Yunnan Province, Fukien(Fujian) Province and Kwangtung(Guangdong) Province, among which those returned to their hometowns by land transported through Kunming and Chungking (Chongqing) and those headed for their hometown by seaway transported through Foochow(Fuzhou), Amoy(Xiamen), Swatow(Shantou), and Canton(Guangzhou).

At the end of World War II, Burma still remained in an unstable political situation. In 1947, Britain and Burma signed the *Aung San—Atlee Agreement*²¹ and the *Nu—Attlee Agreement*²² successively, coming to an agreement on the independence of Burma. On January 4th, 1948, Burma officially declared its independence, becoming the first former British colony declaring independence outside the British Commonwealth after World War II.

World War II resulted in an outflow and backflow of population around the world. Since the late wartime, UNRRA, governments and immigrant communities set to make preparations for sending back of returned foreign residents. In 1944, Chungking (Chongqing) Overseas Chinese Association, entrusted by the British consul in Chungking (Chongqing), set to handle the registration of sending back of returned overseas Chinese to British overseas territories.²³

4. Emergence of the Conflict in Repatriation Operation

In early 1946, the Chinese's repatriation to Burma got into its stride. UNRRA offered transportation, including aircraft and ship, to send the overseas Chinese stranded in China back to Rangoon. Major participant branch offices of the ROC Government included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission and the Relief and Rehabilitation Office under the Executive Yuan (RROUEY). They took charge of welfare assistances, registration affairs and the bilateral connection with Burma. At the same time, the returned overseas Chinese established local organizations to cooperate with repatriation arrangements. On February 12, 1946, Chungking (Chongqing) took the lead in carrying out the stranded overseas Chinese back to Burma.

²⁰ 謝培屏 (2003). *戰後遣返華僑史料彙編 (1)(緬甸篇)*. Taipei: Academia Historica.

²¹ The Aung San—Atlee Agreement was signed on January 27th, 1947. In the agreement, the Great Britain and Burma agreed conclusions as to the methods by which the people of Burma may achieve their independence, either within or without the Commonwealth, as soon as possible.

²² The Nu—Attlee Agreement was signed on October 1, 1947 in London. With this agreement Burma regained independence from Britain.

²³ 陈孝奇 (1951). *緬華四十年大事記*. Rangoon: XING SHANG Commerce Association of Overseas Chinese of Myanmar Print.

China and Burma connect by both land and seaway. The ROC Government and UNRRA also planned two routes for the repatriation operation, i.e. land route and sea route. Most of the returned overseas Chinese got back to Burma by land or seaway, and a few by plane. On the whole, overseas Chinese stranded in Fukien (Fujian) Province and Kwangtung (Guangdong) Province returned to Burma by seaway from harbors in Canton (Guangzhou), Swatow (Shantou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), and most of overseas Chinese stranded in Yunnan Province and a few in Sicuan (Sichuan) Province, Kweichow (Guizhou) Provinces Province by land.²⁴

However, the sea route met a big stumbling block. Although the Burma Government literally agreed to accept the overseas Chinese who took refuge in China on reentry, it actually took various stonewall strategies. Near the end of the war, the Burma Government asserted that Burma was entering into a military government and could hardly afford this operation due to the short of food and shelters. Through constant efforts of the ROC Government, the Burma Government approved that the former Chinese residents who met with any of the following requirements could reenter Burma: 1) having relatives or friends in Burma; 2) being able to assist with the reconstruction of Burma, including woodworkers, architectural workers and engineers. In October 1946, after UNRRA shipped the first batch of 1,895 overseas Chinese with "Feng-Ching" to Rangoon, the Burma Government suddenly rejected to accept the rest for the reason of government restructuring.

From November 1946 to May 1947, the sea route had been being halted, and over 12,000 Chinese were unable to make the trip but waited at the harbors in Canton (Guangzhou), Swatow (Shantou), Amoy (Xiamen), and Foochow (Fuzhou).²⁵ In November 1946, MOFA of the ROC Government pointed out that the repatriation operation to Burma was the most difficult one if compared with operations of other countries in the Southeast Asia, which include Malaysia, Philippines, North Borneo, Siam, Vietnam, and the Dutch East Indies.²⁶

The sudden action of the Burma Government was closely related to the precarious domestic situation. On the one hand, Burmese had already become antforeign during the colonial time. After the war, the nationalism of Burmese, who fought actively for independence, increasingly rose, and they became more and more xenophobic. Given this situation, the Burma Government literally approved the repatriation while actually delayed as far as possible.

On the other hand, Burma was experiencing a regime change from 1946 to 1947, which could hinder the policy stability. In late September of 1946, a new Executive Council headed by Aung San was established, and the functions and powers of the British Burma's governor were greatly weakened as a result. The new Executive Council was inexperienced actually but eager

²⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1946a).外交部歐洲司簽呈關於歸僑返緬事. National Archives of Republic of China.1946 (10).Taipei: Academia Historica.

²⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1946a).外交部歐洲司簽呈關於歸僑返緬事. National Archives of Republic of China.1946 (10).Taipei: Academia Historica.

²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1946b).外交部歐洲司科長保駿迪報告聯總遣僑會議情形. National Archives of Republic of China.1946 (10).Taipei: Academia Historica.

to formulate new Burma-oriented policies to distinguish itself. Meanwhile, the newly established Executive Council had intense conflicts among the parties inside, which included the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League headed by Aung San, the Patriot Party headed by U Saw, the Thaksin's Party headed by Ba Sheng, the Communist Party, and other parties. In the deep water of fierce competition and conflict, parties shifted their responsibilities to each other on overseas Chinese affairs.

Furthermore, Burma was an important battlefield during World War II, which had been heavily destroyed, and the reconstruction was extremely difficult. At that time, "the country was not revitalized, the economic foundation was not consolidated, the industry was not boosted, the traffic was bad, the price was high, there were bandits everywhere, and the production declined."²⁷ In 1947, a letter from an overseas Chinese who had successfully arrived back at Rangoon was received in Canton (Guangzhou), in which he pointed out that Rangoon was indeed worse than it had been before the war. Burma now was out of order, in a state of devastation, in industrial stagnation, and fully spread with ruins. He also alerted other people who planned to get back to Burma not to expect much from Rangoon as before the war.²⁸ All above made Burma reluctant and unable to accept a large number of foreign settlers in a short time.

The problems of repatriation operation became another excuse. In the official agreement, the operation was to send back the foreign settlers who resided in Burma before the war and were forced to take refuge in their motherland during the war. However, a few persons, seizing the opportunity, pretended to be one of those groups to enter Burma, causing a series problems in the community of foreign settlers. That was another reason why the Burma Government rejected to accept the second batch of returned foreign settlers.²⁹

After the interruption of repatriation operation, UNRRA had been trying its best to persuade the Burma Government. In November 1946, the Burma Government, through the representative of UNRRA in Hong Kong, proposed to designate Burma officials to China to "identify" the overseas Chinese waiting to return to Burma, to make sure there was no one pretending to be. However, the ROC Government rejected this proposal. According to MOFA, that intention would affect China's sovereignty.³⁰ Each side stuck to their own views and consequently the repatriation operation came to a deadlock for a time.

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1946c). 駐仰光總領事尹綠光電陳外交部交涉歸僑返緬經過. National Archives of Republic of China. 1946 (13). Taipei: Academia Historica.

²⁸ J.Chan (Sep 1st, 1947). Return to Burma: Repatriation of Overseas Chinese from H.K.—ESCAPED FROM JAPS, *South China Morning Post*, A1.

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947a). 駐仰光總領事尹綠光電外交部緬政府尚未同意第二批歸僑返緬; 駐仰光總領事尹綠光電陳外交部交涉歸僑返緬經過. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (5). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947b). 外交部電駐仰光總領事尹綠光關於緬方派員赴廈甄別歸僑事我方原則不能同意援前例據理交涉; 外交部長王世傑復國民政府主席蔣中正交涉歸僑返緬經過. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (6). Taipei: Academia Historica.

5. Dissolving Conflict: the Multi-Level Diplomatic Strategy

The ROC Government paid close attention to the conflict in repatriation operation. In order to ease contradictions, MOFA and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commissions did make great efforts. According to the DP Program plan, UNRRA and the ROC Government should accomplish their tasks respectively in June 1947, when UNRRA would stopped giving assistance to stranded overseas Chinese by shutting down the domestic relief and sending back stations. Therefore, the sudden delay made all sides anxious. In late December of 1946, CHIANG Kai-shek, the president of the ROC Government, ordered by telegramming WANG Shi-jie, the foreign minister, and CHEN Shu-ren, the overseas Chinese commissioner, to “rapidly send back” and give relief to the delayed overseas Chinese.³¹ In January 1947, CHEN Shu-ren sent correspondence to WANG Shi-jie, requiring MOFA to accept the Burma Government’s proposal, so as to facilitate the repatriation.³²

Overseas Chinese also presented petitions actively to the government. HUANG Zhi-da, the representative of Burma Chinese Association, sent correspondence to WANG Shi-jie, requiring to deliver “a strong protest” against the Britain; LIANG Jin-shan, the representative of Burma Chinese Association, sent correspondence to CHIANG Kai-shek, pointing out that the delayed 4,000 overseas Chinese who “suffered heavily” were waiting for nearly three months since registration; WU Bi-quan, the representative of the overseas Chinese stranded in Canton(Guangzhou) also applied to CHIANG Kai-shek for “actively negotiating with the Burma Government”; etc.³³ After receiving these requests, Chiang Kai-shek pressed MOFA to “rapidly handle it.”³⁴

In order to break the ice, MOFA took “multi-level diplomatic strategy” in negotiations with Burma.

The first level was through official channels. Besides the Chinese Embassy directly negotiated with the Burma Government in Rangoon, MOFA officially communicated with the British Foreign Office through Sino-British diplomatic channels. It also communicated with ZHENG Tian-ci, the Chinese Ambassador in the Great Britain, while presenting a note to the British Embassy in China, with a view to, in virtue of the instruction of the Britain, the suzerain of Burma, persuading the Burma Government to accept the second batch of the returned overseas Chinese. However, the relation between Britain and Burma was subtle at that time: although Britain was the colonial power of Burma, it was under the stress of Burma’s strong call for independence. In February 1947, Britain invited Burma delegation to visit London, so as to settle the problem on Burma’s independence through negotiations. Upon the request of China, Britain officially consulted with the

³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947c). 國民政府主席蔣中正電外交部長王世傑請核議切實辦法以救濟留穗緬甸歸僑. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (9). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947d). 僑務委員會委員長陳樹人函請外交部長王世傑贊同緬政府派員至廈協助遣送歸僑返緬. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (11). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947e). 國民大會緬甸僑民代表黃志大函外交部長王世傑為緬政府留難廈門廣州歸僑請向英駐華大使抗議, 善後救濟總署電外交部留穗緬甸華僑請求迅予遣送案請核覆. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (15). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947f). 國民政府主席蔣中正電外交部長王世傑據伍碧泉稱緬政府多方推延請積極交涉. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (16). Taipei: Academia Historica.

Burma Government, but got nowhere in the matters concerning the specific issues, and only got a principled commitment from the Burma Government to “permit the return of the second batch of overseas Chinese”.³⁵

The second level was through international organization. MOFA actively strengthened cooperation with UNRRA, which was the key factor driving Burma to change its attitude. As a transnational organization, UNRRA functioned outside the official negotiation channels between China and Burma, shouldering the responsibility for active communication and coordination. D. H. Clarke, the representative of UNRRA in Hong Kong, communicated directly with the Chinese Government while sending collision to Rangoon. In January 1947, the ROC Government, under the pressure, in order to protect the interests and rights of overseas Chinese, took the lead to give in. Considering both the sovereignty principle and the interests of overseas Chinese, China could only accept the Burma Government to send officials to “assist” or “help” UNRRA in this operation but could hardly accept the officials of the Burma Government to be main directors.³⁶ On behalf of the ROC Government, Clarke conveyed that China agreed if Burma sent officials to China only for “assistance” and the Burmese side accepted.³⁷ On January 16, Clarke flew to Nanking (Nanjing) to have a face-to-face talk about the repatriation issue with MOFA.³⁸ Both sides reached an agreement. The repatriation operation met a turnaround.

The coordination role of UNRRA had prevented the two sides from conflicts. Since then, both the Chinese side and the Burmese side tended to deliver messages by UNRRA. UNRRA (referred to as the International Refugee Organization later) had been participating throughout the Sino-Burma negotiations, becoming an indispensable driving force in repatriation.

The third level was through non-governmental forces. The public diplomatic activities contributed a lot to the Sino-Burma negotiations. The ROC Government had clearly put forwards the idea of “public diplomacy” not later than the Sino-Japanese War period.³⁹ In this conflict, the general consulate of China in Rangoon asked LI Wen-zhen, the president of the Chinese Commerce Association in Burma, GUO Zong-ji and ZHANG Zhen-yu, leaders of Fukien (Fujian) overseas Chinese in Burma, to privately lobby the person in charge of the Burmese side.⁴⁰ During the negotiations, leaders of overseas Chinese associations in Burma actively informed the Chinese

³⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947g). 英駐華大使館照會外交部緬政府允准第二批歸僑返緬; 駐英大使鄭天賜電外交部英政府允准第二批歸僑返緬. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (17). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947h). 外交部電請駐仰光總領事尹綠光轉達緬方我同意緬派員協助聯總遣僑工作. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (17). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947i). 外交部駐廣東廣西特派員郭德華電外交部緬方派員赴廈甄審歸僑事. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (18). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947j). 外交部駐香港辦事處電外交部為聯總駐港代表 Clarke 赴京洽商歸僑返緬事; 外交部電善後救濟總署已請聯總徑電緬政府儘早派員辦理遣僑. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (19). Taipei: Academia Historica.

³⁹ 何頤武 (1938). “华侨与国民外交.” 华侨先锋 (*China Japan War Chinese Magazine Book*), No.2, 10-13.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947k). 駐仰光總領事尹綠光電陳外交部交涉歸僑返緬經過. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (19). Taipei: Academia Historica.

side of the attitude of Burma. For example, CHEN Zong-zhen, the member of Rangoon Commerce Association, revealed the schedule of U Thein Maung and introduced the domestic situation of the Burma Government to the ROC Government.⁴¹ After the delay of repatriation, WU Bi-quan, the representative of Kwangtung (Guangdong) overseas Chinese, flew to Burma to put forward a plan for overseas Chinese group maintenance.⁴² Since Qing Dynasty, overseas Chinese had laid a solid social foundation in Burma. The lobbying by overseas Chinese in support to the ROC Government had made a certain difference in settling the conflict of repatriation.

Through the active coordination of UNRRA, U Thein Maung, the chief delegate of Burma, with HONG Jin-ming, the counselor of China, and HU Mao-xuan, the secretary, arrived at Amoy (Xiamen) in April 1947, starting identifying overseas Chinese. According to the estimated statistics in late December of 1947, the number of qualified Chinese was: 1,916 persons from Foochow (Fuzhou), 1,330 persons from Amoy (Xiamen), 1,245 persons from Swatow (Shantou), 251 persons from Canton (Guangzhou), 75 persons from Shanghai, 15 persons from Haikou, 2 persons from Taiwan, and the total number of qualified overseas Chinese was 6,834.⁴³

Facing the pressure to protect the interests of overseas Chinese, MOFA behaved with a certain audacity and a prudent realism. Rather than stubborn in the traditional diplomatic way, it not only made a wise concession but also cooperated with international organizations and non-government forces. Finally, the deadlock in the repatriation operation was broken, and valuable achievements in diplomacy had been made.

In the middle of 1947, the independence of Burma became obvious. The flood of overseas Indians and Chinese into Burma aroused controversy. Burma started tightening the immigration and exit-entry system by law. In May 1947, the Executive Council of Burma resumed the Alien Registration Law promulgated in 1940, and officially notified China, the United States and the Netherlands of the cancellation of exemption. HSU Shao-chang, consul general of China in Rangoon, and the Chinese Commerce Association in Burma lodged protests⁴⁴, which temporarily delayed the implementation of the registration system.⁴⁵ On June 13, 1947, the Burma authorities promulgated The Burma Immigration (Emergency Provisions) Act. In accordance with the Act, any alien shall not enter the Union of Burma without an entry permit issued by the Burma Immigration Office or a passport with visa, and the violators will be expelled. The enforcement of the Act marked that Burma terminated the incentive immigration policy in the colonial period, and turned to a restrictive immigration

⁴¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947l).駐廣東廣西特派員郭德華電外交部關於派員與聯總代表及仰光商會陳宗珍洽談遣僑事. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (23).Taipei: Academia Historica.

⁴² Wong Li(1947). 緬僑領伍碧泉赴緬交涉復員. 粵僑導報, 13-14.

⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1947m).外交部駐廣東廣西特派員公署香港辦事處電外交部第三批返緬歸僑已遣竣. National Archives of Republic of China. 1947 (22).Taipei: Academia Historica.

⁴⁴ National Archives Department. *Burma Chinese Chamber of Commerce to the Secretary of Defense and External Affairs Department*. Accession No.21, Series No.15/3(9), 40, Yangon, Myanmar.

⁴⁵ National Archives Department. *Shao-Chang Hsu to U Shwe Baw*. Accession No.21, Series No.15 /3(9), 41-43, Yangon, Myanmar.

policy. At that time, the border between Burma and Yunnan Province of China was not officially delimited, and whether the Act was applicable to the overseas Chinese entering Burma by land transportation would directly affect a large number of overseas Chinese. The consulate general of China in Rangoon raised an objection, made a qualified statement, and negotiated with the Burmese side through repeated talks.⁴⁶ The overseas Chinese's repatriation to Burma by land transportation was not significantly interrupted until the middle of 1948.

On January 14, 1948, Burma achieved independent and established the Union of Burma. Thereafter, the Burma Government tightened the immigration policy to slow down the progress of overseas Chinese repatriation by seaway again. Then in May 1948, the Communist Party of Burma provoked the civil war and claimed that the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma would carry out a strict inspection of overseas Chinese by land transportation.⁴⁷ In early 1949, the ROC Government sent back two batches of overseas Chinese to Burma, 978 persons in total, and the rest of 2,000 persons were planned to be sent back by June.⁴⁸ However, it was regrettable that at that time both the Burma and ROC Government were suffering an internal intense strife and were unable to continue the operation, thus the repatriation had to be required to stop. On June 4th, the last batches of 63 returned overseas Chinese arrived at Rangoon,⁴⁹ which marked that the repatriation operation of overseas Chinese to Burma launched by the ROC Government came to the end.

From 1946 to 1949, the ROC Government had sent back over 9,000 overseas Chinese to Burma by seaway in total. According to the data, about 4,000 returned overseas Chinese who had passed the inspection had not been sent back. That is to say, the ROC Government had just completed 70% or so of the intended goal.⁵⁰ Also, some overseas Chinese stranded in Fukien (Fujian) Province and Kwangtung (Guangdong) Province were transferred to Yunnan Province during waiting, of which the figure was difficult to calculate. According to the available statistics on repatriation operation by land transportation, from January 1946 to September 1947, the number of returned overseas Chinese sent back to Burma by truck by the Kunming Refugee Transport Station, the Office of Sending back of Overseas Chinese in Kunming and the Office in western Yunnan reached 3,839 in total.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1948). 外交部電雲南特派員公署詳報發給入緬護照事. National Archives of Republic of China. 1948 (10). Taipei: Academia Historica.

⁴⁷ National Archives Department. *Minutes of the meetings held in the Office Room of the Permanent Secretary, Foreign Office*. Accession No.36, Series No.15 /3 (15), Yangon, Myanmar.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1949a). 駐緬甸大使塗允檀呈報外交部關於交涉緬方暫停華僑復員經過情形. National Archives of Republic of China. 1949 (2). Taipei: Academia Historica.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of National Government of the Republic of China (1949b). 駐緬甸大使館電外交部歸僑63人乘豐祥輪抵仰光. National Archives of Republic of China. 1949 (5). Taipei: Academia Historica.

⁵⁰ Statistics from 陈孝奇 (1951). 緬華四十年大事記. Rangoon: XING SHANG Commerce Association of Overseas Chinese of Myanmar Print; 謝培屏 (2003). 戰後遣返華僑史料彙編 (1)(緬甸篇), 10-17. Taipei: Academia Historica.

⁵¹ The Relief and Rehabilitation Office under the Executive Yuan of National Government, Republic of China. 行政院善後救濟總署總報告. Collection historical archives of Republic of China, Vol 3, Series 5, Nanking, People's Republic of China.

In addition, some overseas Chinese got back to Burma by sporadically repatriation operations excluded in the concentrated ones, of which the figure was difficult to calculate. It was estimated that the number of returned overseas Chinese who were actually sent back to Burma by the ROC Government by seaway, land transportation or plane reached about 15,000. *The Annals of Overseas Chinese in Burma* from Taiwan also points out that UNRRA “had sent back over 15,000 overseas Chinese to Burma within more than two years”.⁵² The number of overseas Chinese in Burma reached the pre-war level in the early 1950s. It should be noted that the returned overseas Chinese sent back by the ROC Government were those who were qualified only.

6. Conclusion

World War II resulted in a huge international migration, and the Pacific War had directly affected residents in the Southeast Asia. The repatriation operation on overseas Chinese to Burma was a typical case which was unprecedented in respect of scale in modern history of China. Although the operation was left incomplete, in all, the efforts to repatriated stranded overseas Chinese demonstrate the significant characteristics of diplomatic strategy of the Republic of China.

The period from 1946 to 1949 was not a good time for the repatriation operation when both the Chinese side and the Burmese side were caught into numerous difficulties: Burma was suffering a turbulent political situation and recovering from the Pacific War while China was suffering a weak central government and facing too great an internal threat from the Chinese Communists. Considering the situations of China and Burma, the repatriation operation was worth being positively evaluated. The ROC Government highly emphasized the operation with a view to protecting and relieving overseas Chinese in spite of external and internal troubles, and had successfully finished 70% of the intended goal.

The dissolving of the conflict of repatriation operation on overseas Chinese to Burma directly benefited from the “multi-level diplomatic strategy” of the ROC Government. MOFA did not stick in the mud when suffering a setback in the traditional approach but actively tried a “multi-level” approach, which means that resolving the conflict not only by official approach but also with the help of UNRRA and the non-governmental force. Concerned about the interests of overseas Chinese, MOFA acted actively in negotiations with a flexible and practical attitude to consider both the principle and the reality, making a certain compromise when in dilemma. Finally, the repatriation operation was carried out in numerous difficulties.

The handling of the conflict in repatriation operation of overseas Chinese to Burma by the ROC Government showed the positive interoperation between diplomacy and overseas Chinese affairs. The position of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission under the ROC Government had been constantly adjusted. It was subordinate to MOFA first, and then became subordinate to the Executive Yuan, equally with MOFA at the same executive level. This reflected that the ROC

⁵² 《華僑志》編纂委員會(1967). 緬甸華僑志. Taipei: 《華僑志》編纂委員會

Government had been paying increasing attention to overseas Chinese affairs. The division of the diplomatic work was clear: MOFA acted “outside the country”, and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission “inside the country”. The former took charge of diplomatic negotiations on overseas Chinese affairs, and the latter took charge of relief on overseas Chinese refugees. The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission could not solve the overseas Chinese affairs problem without the cooperation of MOFA, and MOFA was supervised and urged by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission when handling overseas Chinese related problem. This marked that the government of China in modern times had basically completed the exploration of the functional relationship between diplomacy and overseas Chinese affairs.

(Received 6th May, 2016)

(Accepted 30th July, 2016)